

CHEETAL

A Journal of

Wild Life Preservation Society of India



VOL. 5

APRIL, 1963

No. 2

Wild Life Preservation Society of India.

I. The aims and objects of the Society are as follows :

- (a) To promote interest in the preservation and conservation of all forms of animal life among the youth of the country.
- (b) To assist in enforcing the game and arms rules and to bring to the notice of the authorities any infringements of the same.
- (c) To advise and help Government and the District authorities in the formation, maintenance and protection of Sanctuaries and National Parks.
- (d) To raise funds for the carrying out of the above aims and objects.
- (e) To carry on any other activities which will serve the above objectives, including publicity and propaganda and the issue of a journal.
- (f) To assist members of the Society in obtaining shooting and fishing facilities and facilities for viewing and photographing wild life etc.

II The Society has, upto date :—

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Ordinary members	...	180	Honorary members	...	10
Institutional members	...	4	Student members	...	96
Affiliated members	...	6	Family Members	...	2

Total Membership is 437.

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Wild Life Preservation Society of India

Vol. V }

April, 1963

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Ourselves

Elsewhere we publish, with the kind permission of the Bombay Natural History Society, one of the most extraordinary shikar stories we have ever heard, which is, we believe, not an excursion into fiction, but a plain statement of 20th century fact.

One of the victims is Hugh Allen who is the owner of a farm on the edge of a forest in

INSERTED BY THE HONORARY SECRETARY

While relinquishing office as Honorary Secretary of the Society due to pressure of work in my own business, I take this opportunity of thanking all my friends, patrons, members and subscribers to the "Cheetal", and all those associated with this Institution, for their kind help and co-operation which I received from them, and which I have very greatly appreciated. I offer them all my very best wishes and thanks.

Gurkirat Singh Mann.

in India was like shooting rabbits from a Sherman Tank. In other words he had been taken tiger-shooting at night from a jeep, using the headlights and a spot-light, had killed one or more tigers in this most unsporting way, and he didn't think much of it after his experiences in Africa, where Government strictly enforces laws against such unsporting, and, in Africa, illegal methods. We believe that Hugh Allen persuaded Ruark to come out to India again and to shoot a tiger in the only sporting way (see Dunbar Brandon's 'Wild Animals of Central India', passim.) It was regrettable that he joined a shikar company, which was not prepared to obey the unfortunately unwritten laws of shooting.

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Ourselves

Elsewhere we publish, with the kind permission of the Bombay Natural History Society, one of the most extraordinary shikar stories we have ever heard, which is, we believe, not an excursion into fiction, but a plain statement of 20th century fact.

One of the victims is Hugh Allen who is the owner of a farm on the edge of a forest in Madhya Pradesh and the author of the delightful book, "The Lonely Tiger", a collection of stories of life on the farm, involving natural history, human relations and shikar. The other victim is the well known American sportsman and writer, Robert Ruark. The highlight of the story is when both Bob Ruark and Hugh Allen are mauled by a leopard before it is killed—a series of accidents for which neither of the two can be blamed. What is not narrated in the article is that Hugh Allen received a second mauling from the directors of the Shikar Company of which he had been misguided enough to become a director—not merely a moral mauling but a physical one!

Those who have read "The Lonely Tiger" may well ask how the author, after his trenchant criticism of some shikar companies could ever bring himself to join one. The answer, one presumes, is partly to supplement his slender income from the farm and partly to prove to Bob Ruark and other Americans that professional shikar companies in India need not necessarily employ unsporting methods of shooting tigers. Bob Ruark had written, to his wide American public, after a previous and unhappy experience in India, that tiger shooting, in India was like shooting rabbits from a Sherman Tank. In other words he had been taken tiger-shooting at night from a jeep, using the headlights and a spot-light, had killed one or more tigers in this most unsporting way, and he didn't think much of it after his experiences in Africa, where Government strictly enforces laws against such unsporting, and, in Africa, illegal methods. We believe that Hugh Allen persuaded Ruark to come out to India again and to shoot a tiger in the only sporting way (see Dunbar Brandon's 'Wild Animals of Central India', passim.) It was regrettable that he joined a shikar company, which was not prepared to obey the unfortunately unwritten laws of shooting.

The excuse for shooting in this unsporting way is that in Madhya Pradesh, and possibly Orissa and Bihar, there is no definite provincial rule prohibiting such shooting. To this we shall refer later.

We have been in close and friendly correspondence on this subject with one of the best known of the government recognized shikar firms. Their activities are concentrated on the U.P. Tarai and foothills. They shoot tigers by beating, which is done by a few elephants, with perhaps a certain number of men up trees as stops. They do not employ a hundred elephants to form a ring round two or three unfortunate tigers, as used to be done in Nepal, and which we consider unsporting shooting. A few elephants are used instead of beaters, because, in the tall grass typical of the Tarai, beating by human beings is rather dangerous. The tiger may be come upon suddenly, at the distance of a few yards, and attack the beaters. In Madhya Pradesh and the Dehra Dun and Saharanpur forests beating by men is safe, provided the beat is directed in the direction the tiger will naturally go; and the beaters are willing.

Here we come to a crucial point. Shooting tigers by beating, whether by elephants or by men, is far more expensive than shooting by 'night-driving' in a jeep. Shooting by sitting up over a kill is less expensive though quite legal. Shooting by 'night-driving' is far less expensive than either method. Your American sportsman is taken out 'night driving', and sooner or later he shoots his tiger. The result is that the American, unless he is a Bob Ruark, is pleased and the shikar company rakes in the dollars, out of all proportion to the expense incurred.

The recognized shikar firms in India are capable of becoming our greatest allies in Wild Life Preservation. It is very much in their interest that they should have something left for their clients to shoot. The poacher is their worst enemy. We should encourage them. They have an association, which meets from time to time to discuss policy. They should take particular care to exclude from their membership firms which practice unsporting methods.

Here we come up against another problem. There are, it appears, on the evidence of a distinguished member of the Indian Wild Life Board, no all India Wild Life rules. Each province is allowed to have its own rules. In Madhya Pradesh there is no rule against shooting animals at night from jeeps. So Shikar companies are legally entitled to get their clients tiger or panther or any other animal by methods which are definitely unsporting, and which are inimicable to wild life preservation. Whether they do so or not depends on their own ideals of sport.

Could not the Govt. of India issue certain very few and very simple rules connected with shooting and fishing, which would be enforceable throughout India, whatever the provinces

have to say? These rules are obviously desirable in the interests of Wild Life Preservation. Wild Life Preservation in India is as essential as anything else, even in the emergency. The rules should be enforced by really severe penalties, but the trouble is that the penalties at present are so small that any poacher will be prepared to pay the fine. Why not, instead of a fine of Rs. 100 or so, which any commercial poacher is prepared to pay, since he will very soon make good his loss by further poaching, make it five years rigorous imprisonment?

We suggest seven rules which, without any controversy, might be enforced by the Government of India—or the provinces. If these rules were enforced on every offender, whatever his rank, the wild life problem of India would be solved, provided the penalty is 5 years rigorous imprisonment, and provided that the question is decided by the Forest or Wild Life authorities and not allowed to be dragged into the civil courts.

My seven rules are as follows:—

1. No shooting is allowed from a car or other vehicle by day or night of any kind of game. The sportsman must get out of his vehicle before he shoots.
2. No shooting of game at salt-licks or water-holes.
3. No shooting of hoofed game—deer, bison etc. by beating.
4. No shooting of tiger, or any bigger animal, e.g. bison, with any rifle less than .375.
5. No taking of fish by the use of explosives or poisoning.
6. No diverting or damming up of streams for the purpose of taking fish.
7. Netting to be strictly regulated by the local Wild Life authorities so that immature fish may not be taken and a net may not be stretched across a stream so that no fish can escape.

These are comparatively simple rules which, if enforced, would solve India's Wild Life problem very quickly. Why cannot the centre enforce them as it enforces many other rules? With the prospect of a certain five years rigorous imprisonment poachers would be inclined to hold their hand. If this penalty is considered excessively severe, it should be remembered that, not so long ago, the penalty for killing a cow in Kashmir was life imprisonment! The penalty for murder is death or life imprisonment. This is murder all right.

To revert to the Ruark incident. Hugh Allen came in for a good deal of criticism from recognized shikar firms. His name is bracketed with the firm he became a partner in, firstly on the score of the illegitimate use of the jeep for 'night driving' in the previous shikar party; secondly on account of the 'dead leopard' trick, which shocked Hugh Allen as much as it did Ruark; thirdly on account of his endangering his client's life by allowing him first to shoot at

a leopard off the ground and then, having wounded it, by not taking him to a place of safety, so giving shikar companies a bad reputation in the eyes of foreign visitors.

But it must be remembered that the leopard was unwounded when first met with; and who would not, being suitably armed, shoot at a leopard casually met with? Again the animal was never out of sight of the party even in the near darkness. Again who could possibly foresee or provide against the coincidence of a jamming of a round in the rifle and the failure at close range of LG shot-gun cartridges recently bought? And would it have been strictly ethical to leave a wounded animal in the forest till the next day?

The moral of the story is: (i) that foreign visitors should know something about the company they engage before committing themselves; (2) that the 'Shikar Outfitters Association' should not admit to their membership any firm that is known to employ dubious (if not actually illegal) methods of hunting, such as night driving or sitting up over salt-licks or water-holes; (3) that, if the centre is unwilling to legislate along the lines suggested above, the Provinces should come to the rescue and condemn and prevent all illegitimate shooting. We hear on very good authority that in Orissa it is free for all, 'with no holds barred'. As a consequence bison of any sex or size are being shot by spotlight, and over water-holes; and the forest authorities simply are not interested.

It is all so simple, if only the state governments had the interest, the courage, and the initiative to act. Who are going to oppose them? Is there going to be a cabinet crisis because the Chief Minister rules that wild animals shall not be murdered?

Editorial Notes

A few months ago it was announced that the heir to the British throne, Prince Charles, had shot a red-deer stag in Scotland. H.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, his father, has identified himself closely with the movement for Wild Life Preservation throughout the World. He has been under fire before the Left Wing or anti-royalist press for having dared to shoot a tiger in Jaipur under perfectly fair conditions. If we ordinary citizens are allowed to beat for tiger, why should it be a crime for the Duke to do so? He is under fire again from the same direction.

The facts above the red deer stag are these: red deer in Scotland are shot by stalking. This involves crawling over heather, and often bog, uphill and downhill, until a certain shot is guaranteed—conditions which these journalists would be totally incapable of enduring. The professional shikaris, called 'gillies' have a very strong sense of the proprieties of deer stalking. They are in charge of the stalk. They will not let the sportsman, whether he is the heir-apparent to the throne of Great Britain or an ordinary citizen, shoot at a stag that is not 'warrantable'—i.e., has not big enough antlers. They will not let him shoot from a range at which a sure kill is not certain. These 'gillies' are what we should call 'tribesmen'. They have immaculate manners, but they will not allow anyone, be he prince or commoner, to disobey their rules.

Prince Charles' stag must have been shot the hard way. No other way is possible in the Highlands. If all the deer shot in India were shot in this way, by stalking, under similarly strict conditions, there would be no problem of Wild Life Preservation at all.

Why don't these journalists leave alone the Royal Family, whose sporting methods are above question, and concentrate on preventing their proletarian readers from destroying our Wild Life by methods that simply defy description? For one deer that is shot, as by Prince Charles, under entirely sporting conditions, one thousand are being massacred, in India at any rate, by a proletariat interested only in making money.

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The Population of Red Jungle Fowl in the Dehra Dun and Saharanpur Divisions

This area of reserved forest, and riverine, ex-zamindari forest, of thick 'bainsa' undergrowth and 'ber' (*Zizyphus jujuba*) and 'Mohini' trees used to be the finest jungle-fowl shooting areas in Northern India.

Before World War II it was heavily shot. The zamindari forest was, unless the zamindar objected, which he seldom did, free for any sportsman without a permit. Annual permits in each division were granted up to the number of ten, I believe. Monthly permits were granted almost without restriction. On top of this the second Gurkha Rifles were, by a hereditary arrangement, allowed to shoot in Dehra Dun reserved forests, except where a block had been allotted for big game shooting. Big shooting parties used to go out, with fifty or more 'jawans' beating, and bags of between fifty and a hundred birds were common.

Today the 2nd Gurkhas and their shooting privileges have disappeared. Annual permits have been abolished. Monthly permits for small game shooting have been drastically curtailed. Last year, shooting in the first half of the month was forbidden by the Forest authorities. Now it has been restored. In spite of these restrictions the jungle-fowl population has decreased.

Two years ago, shooting mainly in the Saharanpur division, we found jungle-fowl very plentiful. Last year, after the reduction of monthly permits to four in the division birds were far less abundant.

This year the monthly permits have been increased in the Saharanpur division to eight. Birds are more abundant than last year, but not nearly so abundant as the year before.

What is the explanation? Before World War II the Dehra Dun and Saharanpur divisions were far more heavily shot than they are today. Today, in spite of drastic restrictions in the matter of permits, and the greatly increased cost of cartridges, the number of jungle-fowl is less. A recent census of Wild Life in the Dehra Dun forest division claimed that there were as many cheetal as jungle-fowl. This is fantastically incorrect. For every cheetal, you see at least fifty jungle-fowl. But still the number of jungle-fowl is far less than would be expected as a result of the enormous restrictions that have recently been imposed on jungle-fowl shooting.

Recently the Americans have been collecting eggs of jungle-fowl with the idea of introducing the species to favourable parts of America. They have, we believe, been very successful. The people employed to collect eggs are, naturally, the villagers, and once the idea of collecting eggs, under licence, has been started, the idea persists and jungle-fowl eggs are probably being collected and sold, or consumed, as hen's eggs, without any license.

There is another possible explanation. Those who have any knowledge of pheasant preservation in England or America are aware that, if the pheasant population becomes excessive for the area concerned, the birds get disease. This is probably what is happening in the Doon and Saharanpur divisions. Shooting has been so restricted that the birds, being

overcrowded in certain localities, get disease and their number is reduced far more than would have been done by the almost unrestricted shooting of the pre World War II years.

We are tired of advising the Forest Department, though the advisers have some knowledge of game bird conservation while the advised have less, and do not always listen to the advice of experts. Our final advice is that the restrictions on the shooting of jungle-fowl should be relaxed, to the pre World War II level, and that the energies of the Wild Life Department of the Indian Forest Services should be concentrated on the prevention of the collection of eggs, shooting at sitting birds by crop-protection guns, and taking of jungle-fowl by netting.

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Wild Dog in the Doon

As a member of a shooting party in the Jhabrawala block in Dehra Dun Forest Division I was driving my jeep down from a Gujar station in the Siwaliks, when I saw two animals on the road. The Gujarars keep big, burly dogs of an unspecified breed to protect their cattle. For a moment I thought they were Gujarars' dogs. Then I realised, from their lanky shape, red colour, and the slight ruff round their necks that they were wild dogs, which I had only previously seen in Madhya Pradesh, and never before in Dehra Dun or Saharanpur Divisions. The Shikari handed me my 12 bore loaded with No. 6 cartridges, though I had with me a .470 rifle. There was no time to lose. One of the dogs had slunk off into the jungle. The other remained on the path puzzled by the jeep. I got out of the jeep and took a hasty shot at about fifty yards. The dog moved off dragging his hind quarters. We followed up but found no trace.

For ten days, we had tied-up for tiger and had not had a kill. Is it possible that the tigers, usually present in the Jhabrawala block, had decamped owing to the presence of Wild dogs? I have read that, where there are wild dogs, tigers and the game they feed on, Sambhar, Cheetal, pig will go to other parts. The wild dog, a handsome and interesting animal, is almost as destructive of wild life as the most inveterate poacher, and should be destroyed whenever encountered.

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A Wild Life Census

In the STATESMAN of Oct., 8th, 1962, there was a paragraph headed 'Where Cheetal and Jungle Fowl abound'. We were surprised to find that this favoured area was the Dehra Dun

Forest Division. The number of wild animals and birds in the division, according to a census made in March 1962 by the forest authorities, is as follows:

Cheetal	...	893	
Kakar	...	171	
Sambhar	...	57	
Panther	...	14	
Tiger	...	7	
Wild Boar	...	177	
Jackal	...	30	
Bear	...	5	
Jungle Fowl	...	870	
Peacock	...	80	
'Rabbits' (sic)	...	11	(presumably the Indian hare is meant. There are no wild rabbits in India.)
Wild Cats	...	2	
Porcupines	...	10	

One wonders how the census was conducted. Some of the figures are simply amazing. First of all to take the figure of 893 cheetal. Cheetal have been the worst sufferers from the really bad years of poaching 1943-58. In the last four or five years there has been some improvement. A figure as high as 893, however, is difficult to believe. Since the Dehra Dun forest division is divided into eleven shooting areas, and since cheetal are essentially gregarious animals usually congregating into as big herds as possible, it would be reasonable to suppose that holders of the seven or eight better blocks would observe herds of fifty or more cheetal together. In the last fifteen years I have rarely seen as many as ten animals together. I wonder if any other Dehra Dun Sportsman has seen more.

But let us assume that the census of Cheetal is correct, as I hope it may be. If so the census of jungle fowl must be hopelessly, fantastically, absurdly incorrect. To say that there less jungle-fowl than cheetal in the division is simply not believable. For one thing the jungle fowl did not suffer a fraction of the damage done to the cheetal in the acute poaching period. The cost of cartridges makes poaching of jungle fowl uneconomic. Even assuming 100% accuracy in the poacher's shooting—he does not, of course, fire unless he sees a sitting bird—it is far more profitable to shoot 150 lbs. of cheetal meat than 3 lbs., or less, of jungle-fowl. I have been an ardent bird-shot since 1940. I have taken every opportunity that a hard-worked schoolmaster gets to get out into the forest after jungle-fowl. There are now nearly as many jungle-fowl as there were in 1940. Indiscriminate forest exploitation—the rule now in these degenerate days—has resulted in a decrease of good jungle-fowl cover. The zamindars have hastily cut down their forests before expropriation. But even so there are plenty of

jungle-fowl. If there are really 893 cheetal there must be at the very least 5000 jungle-fowl. To see a hundred or even two hundred in a day's shooting in one single part of a shooting block is not exceptional.

What is the reason for these strange figures? The wild-life department of the Indian Forest Department have not made a very good job of preserving our cheetal. Cheetal-poachers are determined men. If caught in the act they are liable to shoot the forest-guard. Some forest guards have been shot in the execution of their duty, but they have not been given posthumously, any decoration for their gallantry by the Indian Union. The wild life department of the Forest have found it far safer to turn a blind eye to the professional poacher, or to the VIP who has a big camp and wants meat for his personnel. Instead they restrict, by ordinances, the small game shooter, so that last year (61-62) it was almost impossible to shoot jungle fowl, even if you had a small-game permit. Consequently the high census of cheetal and the low one of jungle fowl, indicating successful preservation of cheetal.

To revert to other figures of the census: There may be no more than 57 Sambhar. But there must be more than 14 panther in the whole division. The number that are seen on the forest roads and in jungle fowl beats proves that. The figure of 7 for the tiger is utterly fantastic. There must be three times as many. Take any of the seven best blocks. If you are the blockholder and are on the look out for tiger, you will find pugmarks of at least two, often more. Some of course may have a range covering more than one shooting area, but even making allowances for this there must be more than twenty tigers in the reserved forests, and more if one counts the adjacent areas of ex-zamindari forests. Again 14 is far too low a figure for panther, especially if one counts the hilly area not in reserved forests. The bigger carnivora are not usually the object of the commercial poacher, who does not enjoy risking his own life. Moreover, in the regrettable absence of deer, the panther can get along very nicely on a diet of goat and village dog. A panther also needs less thick cover than a tiger, so that the cutting down of zamindari forest has not affected him so much.

177 may or may not be a correct figure for wild boar. It must be very difficult to assess them, and many of them spend their time in the sugar-cane as well as the jungle. But since on jungle fowl shooting days one sees about as many wild pig as one sees cheetal, assuming that 893 is the correct figure for cheetal, 177 must be far too small a number for wild pig.

80 may be the right number for pea fowl. Owing to poaching and the immense number of crop-protection guns in action their numbers have dwindled in the reserve forests of the Dun, except for Motichur, Kansrao and Gola Tappar, though in the Saharanpur division there must be over 1000. They are far too many there and they should be thinned out by allowing permit holders to shoot two a day.

We cannot possibly accept 30 as the correct number of jackal. No poachers bother to shoot this verminous pest. It is everywhere causing more serious inroads on our supply of jungle fowl than any number of permit-holding sportsmen.

It is interesting to speculate on how the census authorities arrive at the figure of 5 for bear. The bear in question, of course, is the Himalayan black bear. I don't think there is any reliable evidence of sloth bear in the Dun. I have seen one Himalayan black shot in Thano block and they have been seen in that block several times. The black bear is, of course, semi-migratory, and comes down from the hills in winter with the object of finding wild-honey, and various jungle fruit. I have seen tracks in Timli west, and tracks and very fresh droppings in the Saharanpur division. A week ago one of my colleagues saw one on the Barkot-Rishikesh road. I should say that 15 instead of 5 was a better estimate. Anyhow how on earth are the figures arrived at?

We now come to the greatest absurdities of all. There are only 11 rabbits (the forest authorities must mean hares, since there are no wild rabbits in India) in the whole of the Dehra Dun forests! This is just fantastic. Most owners of a considerable garden would be prepared to show evidence that there were more than 11 in their own garden. I should say that 1100 would be a very modest estimate.

The next item is wild-cats, 2! Have they been identified, and are they male and female? If not, the race of wild cat is on the verge of extinction. There are at least three different species of wild-cat in the Doon Forests—'*Felis Chaus*' the common wild cat, still very abundant; the beautiful 'leopard-cat'—not so common, but I have seen three, come out of one jungle-fowl beat, and the 'Caracal' of which I have myself shot three in the last twenty years, but which appears to be commoner in the Saharanpur division. I should say that 300 instead of 2 would be a nearer estimate, considering all three species. At any rate the estimate of 2 just doesn't make sense.

Porcupines, 10! The porcupine is a very nocturnal gentleman. I have seen two or three only in daylight. But the evidence of his diggings is everywhere. I should multiply the figure by at least ten.

How on earth was this census made? A census that can state that there are only two wild-cats in the whole of the Dehra Dun Forest Division must be completely unscientific. Or eleven hares. Or only seven tigers.

The Statesman reporter has got hold of something. Not knowing it himself, he has exposed an animal census that must be extremely inaccurate. Some of the figures are simply un-

believable and the method of arriving at them—beating of the jungle—cannot be considered scientific.

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Where Cheetal and Jungle Fowl Abound

Cheetal and jungle fowl are in abundance in the Dehra Dun forests, according to the wild life census conducted in March this year.

The following are the census figures: Cheetals 893, kakars 171, sambhars 57, panthers 14, tigers 7, wild boars 177, jackals 30, bears 5, jungle fowl 870, peacocks 80, rabbits 11, wild cats 2 and porcupines 10.

This was the first wild life census in the State after a trial census conducted in May last year.

In the main census operations, which cost the State Government nearly Rs. 7,500. Dehra Dun division was divided into three parts. About 160 local people were engaged as beaters and the enumerators consisted of experienced staff of the Forest Department.

The census results have been sent to the Zoological Survey of India for analysis.

Occasional Notes

(Extract from The New York State Conservationist, Feb.-March 1962)

THE VALUE OF PREDATION

The matter of predators has long been a rather touchy subject since the great majority of people do not like to see any birds killed by predators, whether it's from sentiment or because they prefer to hunt these birds themselves. It is much more complex than someone saying, "We raise and release pheasants for hunters and, therefore, any predator which kills a pheasant should be eliminated so that we have more pheasants". The professional biologists are now well aware of the very important role predators play in the balance of wild life. Too many experiments have been performed in nature proving the value of the predator as the surgeon of wild life to be ignored completely. We must realise that the predators are

after a meal and will get healthy birds as well as sick ones. But because it is easier, they are much more apt to take sick birds first. By simple arithmetic this means that there is less chance for epidemics to spread to the flocks and herds of animals because the sick animals are eliminated quickly.

We should not look at an individual occurrence of predation, distasteful to us, and say that on the basis of this one event we have the answer and that answer is to eliminate all predators. We are somewhat in the position of the medieval medical doctors who were just learning the true cases of disease, but whose patients all insisted on the old quackery cures and panaceas.

To date, the stomachs of literally thousands of hawks have been examined and the percentage of pheasants and other game birds taken by all hawks together is extremely low.

The same birds you hunt would no longer furnish you sport in the sense I am sure you prefer, were they so fearless of life around them that they became "sitting ducks". It is the predators which help us, through the struggle for survival, to produce a better crop of wild game birds. If the hunters prefer to shoot a bird just for their table, I might suggest that buying a similar bird in a pet shop and shooting it might be cheaper; or simply buying the bird at the butcher's shop. It is also much more labour saving. I am sure that hunters, however, prefer birds that occasionally evade their dogs and guns and give good tales of excellent hunting.

E.M. Reilly, Jr., Curator, Zoology,
N.Y.S. Museum and Science Service.

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A Story of Commercialised Shikar

(Reprinted with the kind permission of the Bombay Natural History Society)

To what depths can Indian shikar be brought when it involves foreign sportsmen? It has fallen to my unfortunate lot to throw a little light on the whole sorry situation, because the incident below happened to a shikar firm in which I was a partner.

I was tempted to join this firm because one of the partners appeared to have a fine record as a shikari and was, by all appearances, a great sportsman. On paper, this man was so much better than most in the hunting field that I stood down almost entirely from the shikar side and contented myself with running the camps. To suggest that we should write into the partnership agreement a clause binding the partners to observe the forest rules seemed completely unnecessary.

The very first shoot opened my eyes. We had thoroughly discussed the matter of shooting from jeeps at night and were both agreed that this would not under any circumstances ever be part of our policy. Even so, the jeep started to go out night after night right from the first day, and there was no doubt that it was prowling the forest roads. Then I discovered that some animals had been taken into Betul for skinning without my knowledge. That seemed suspicious, and a few enquiries tended to confirm my fears that animals were being shot at night by spotlight. The result was that at the end of the shoot some registered letters passed between myself and the partner in charge of shikar.

At this stage I normally should have got out of the firm fast, but our next client was Robert Ruark the American author. There were two reasons why I particularly wanted to meet Bob Ruark. The first was that, as a would-be writer myself, it would be worth-while to meet someone from the front rank of contemporary American literature. The second reason was to try and correct the unfortunate impression of shikar that Ruark had obviously been given on his first shoot in India in 1956, on returning from which he wrote an article for *The Saturday Evening Post* entitled 'Shooting Tigers in India is like Shooting Rabbits from a Sherman Tank'. I was going to do everything I could to prevent another article like that.

Just before Ruark arrived (April, 1962), I extracted a promise from my partner to the effect that there would be no shooting from jeeps at night. I also warned him that I was going to ask Ruark for his co-operation in this matter the moment he reached camp. The result was disastrous. With the jeep firmly anchored in camp every night, not a single animal was shot and very few were even sighted for the first twelve days. Nor did this surprise me; the efforts going on during the day to bring animals up to the gun seemed to me unlikely to succeed for a number of reasons. Bob Ruark noticed this and, to start with, he looked on in astonishment. Then he got annoyed. 'What has happened to my much vaunted and highly paid shikari?' he asked. To all intents and purposes, this shikari had given up the unequal struggle and was spending a great part of the day on his bed.

On the 13th day the whole sorry mess boiled to a head. That morning I had told my partner that Ruark was getting restless and that he wanted me to take over the shikar side unless things improved. The answer came that same evening. Just at dusk the jeep screamed into camp trailing a cloud of dust. My partner was excited, and in a breathless voice told Ruark to get ready at once. 'If we go now we can shoot a leopard in 20 minutes, he promised.

In an hour the jeep was back. Bob got out and came to where his wife and I were having a drink in front of the bungalow. He was looking very thoughtful. 'I didn't shoot at it,' he said. 'Why not?' I asked. 'There was something wrong—it just didn't behave like a

leopard.' We were still discussing it two hours later. Bob could not get the idea out of his head that he had been invited to fire at a dead leopard. To this, however, I could not agree. I just could not believe that a professional shikari would ever try a stupid trick like that on a sportsman of Bob Ruark's experience.

At 11-30 we were still talking outside the bungalow. The shikari had not put in an appearance the whole evening and had apparently gone to bed. Without warning I heard the jeep start up. I raced out and caught it before it could get away. In answer to my question about where it was going at this time of night, I was informed that it was a trip 'to look at tiger baits'. That convinced me. It also confirmed a remark that Ginny Ruark had made just a short while before: 'If the jeep goes out tonight, you can be quite sure it's going to bury a dead leopard'. I took the key and the rotor from the jeep and later, when everybody had gone to bed, went out on my own to see what I could find.

It lay about 40 yards off a forest road. A fine big leopard laid out as though it was crouched down by a bush. I judged it to have been dead for the best part of a day.

To use his own words, Bob 'blew his top' when the leopard was brought in to the bungalow. Then, in words I could do nothing but agree with, he ordered the perpetrator of this outrage from the camp.

At this stage the matter should have ended. Bob was anxious to go on with his shoot if I took over the hunting. Although I was quite willing to do this, I suggested to my partner that he might be reinstated if he made Bob a sincere apology. He wouldn't hear of it. He felt that he had been 'grossly insulted' by being turned out of camp and that his reputation had suffered irreparable damage. The dead leopard was waived aside as of little account, and I was warned that 'Mr. Ruark has not heard the last of this'.

He hadn't indeed, and what followed still makes me blush with shame. A part of Bob's bill was owing, and this he told me he would normally have paid without a second thought. But what about the trick with the dead leopard? And what about his highly paid shikari spending most of his time snoring on his bed? Once again I could do nothing but agree with him, but as I was now expecting trouble from the other side, I advised Bob to come with me to the District Magistrate and put everything on record. This he did.

When it was known that no more of the bill was to be paid, the firm of Tiger Trails in the form of the other partners really distinguished itself. Still taking the attitude of injured innocence, and still ignoring the dead leopard, express wires were sent to the American Consulate and to the Government of India Tourist Office asking that Ruark be stopped when he reached Bombay. What the Tourist Office thought I cannot imagine, for at this time the firm had still not received recognition. In addition to the two wires, there was good reason

to believe that an attempt would be made to seize Bob's luggage on Betul station. To save him this embarrassment, he was smuggled out through Itarsi Junction late at night with the help of Dr. Moss of the Swedish Mission at Parada.

This story made the headlines in some 130 American papers through Bob Ruark's syndicated column. He certainly pulled no punches and there was no reason why he should. It must have been a nasty jolt for the Government of India which in all innocence was involved too. But the worst effect of all was undoubtedly on Indian shikar in general. For the past 12 years a picture of shikar as it is today has been building up in the minds of sportsmen abroad. With tales in glossy magazines of tigers shot at night from jeeps and of bison gunned down over water-holes, the picture has seldom been a good one. To it was now added a dead leopard solemnly laid out for an unsuspecting and trusting client to shoot at—surely the most damning brush stroke of all.

In fairness there should be a footnote. On his previous shoot Bob had shot three tigers but no leopard. This time, therefore, leopard was his first objective, and I had this at the front of my mind as soon as I took over. On the second night a big male leopard killed a bait which had been tied by a pile of shrub-sprinkled rocks to one side of a cultivated field. The next day a hide was made on the ground 50 yards from the dead buffalo. Bob and I arrived at 5 o'clock and almost at once heard a leopard calling from a strip of jungle nearby. It went on calling, and it was soon apparent that at least one and possibly two other leopards were about. When the day faded the scene was lit by a setting quarter moon. Soon after 8 o'clock a leopard glided swiftly past the kill. It did this several times during the next hour, on each occasion disappearing into the shadows cast by the rocks. It was still calling at frequent intervals and showed no signs of settling down to feed.

We had decided to sit until 9.30, and if no chance had come by then, we were going to get the leopards out the next day by a neat method Bob had learned in Africa. No chance did come, so when it was time to go we left the hide quietly and set off for the forest road 300 yards away. We were almost there when our torches picked up eyes—the eyes of a leopard in a small patch of jungle 30 yards off the path. Bob knocked it flat with a 30.06, but as there were still signs of life I handed him his 20 bore loaded with buckshot. He gave the leopard both barrels.

Even after that it was still breathing, so now I suggested another shot from the rifle. The light from the moon was tricky, and if the leopard should suddenly get up it might not be easy to deal with it in this particular patch of jungle. It was at this moment that Bob found that a round had jammed in the magazine of his rifle after the first shot. For a few seconds I was unaware of this; and it was in those seconds that the leopard charged. It came at

incredible speed and snarling like a fury. It slapped a paw at Bob but this just tore his shirt. A blow from the butt of the shot gun drove it off, but it stopped within 20 yards. As it was whipping round to come again a blast of buckshot crumpled it to the ground. It dropped so suddenly that by all the rules it should have been dead, but we were not to know then that the ammunition for the 20 bore, bought fresh for this shoot in India, was in fact very old stock. The buckshot was hardly penetrating the leopard's hide and, although it was now lying as still as death, it was in reality only stunned by three pellets at the back of the head.

It had gone down in some brush and was difficult to see. By now the last of the rounds which had been brought for the 20 bore had been fired and Bob's rifle was still jammed. He was nevertheless still hurriedly striving to clear it even though it seemed beyond doubt that the leopard was very dead. It had absorbed terrific punishment from a 30.06 and four charges of buckshot. But all at once it was coming again, and with the speed of an animal that might never have been wounded. This time there was no stopping it.

I saw it spring at Bob's throat. Then they were both crashing to the ground. The rest was wild confusion. With only the light from the moon the leopard was just a blur of bared teeth and flashing claws. It had seized Bob by the arm, so the butt of the shot gun went smashing down on its head. This at last made it let go and turn to retaliate. As its head snapped round its mouth was wide open. With an empty gun there seemed to be only one thing to do and an instant later the barrels of the 20 bore were hard down its throat. This apparently was the right action. In a flurry of flailing legs the leopard flipped on its back and clawed wildly at the barrels of the gun. That enabled Bob to roll clear and spring to his feet.

His arm had been badly mangled and he was in considerable pain, but he set to at once to clear his rifle. How he did it one-handed I still do not know, but all at once came the rip of a bolt slamming home and then the blast of a shot. An instant later the leopard went limp and the fracas was over.

Since that night this affair has been the subject of much comment, and certain interests hurried off to high places with loud cries of 'inexperience' and that this sort of incident was spoiling the game. This really was only to be expected, but to the charge inexperience I should like to say that this leopard was in sight from the moment it was wounded to the end of the fight. Never at any time was there any question of following up a wounded and invisible animal in the dark. It has been suggested that we should have withdrawn well away to a place of safety as indeed we could have done. But to have done that would almost certainly have resulted in the leopard getting away either to die in agony or perhaps to become a menace to both stock and human life. If this is inexperience then I have to plead guilty and so would Bob Ruark.

It has also been said that our most elementary mistake was not to have climbed a tree and pot at the leopard from the safety of its branches. That of course we could have done as we could also have gone shooting bison over water-holes and rabbits from a Sherman tank. As it was we were already face to face with a wounded leopard, and if the plain truth has to be told it simply seemed to us more sporting to give it a fair fight on its own ground where the odds were about even. That we both got hurt was surely just part of the game and nothing that any sportsman would ever complain about. Certainly Bob Ruark never complained.

And he got a good story. Indeed, when I think of what he wrote about Sherman tanks and tigers after his first trip, it seems to me that some good did come out of this shoot after all.

Mandikhera Estate,
P.O. Matkuli,
Piparia, M.P.,
August 6, 1962.

Hugh Allen.

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WILD LIFE PLEDGE

I. The present Wild Life Pledge

"Born and Bred in the Land of Buddha and Gandhi, I give my solemn pledge to protect our country's Forests and their voiceless denizens from wanton and wasteful destruction".

II. Comments on the Pledge as it stands

1. "Born and bred in the land of Buddha and Gandhi"

This covers only those born in India and excludes (a) Indians born outside India and (b) Foreigners resident in India.

2. So much emphasis is laid on the fact of being born and bred in the land of Buddha and Gandhi, that the main purpose of the pledge is lost. The pledge should be to the point.

3. It is not because of being born in the land of Buddha and Gandhi that there is a responsibility to protect wild life, but the responsibility is there even otherwise and this has to be brought out effectively.

4. The opening part of the pledge and the term "voiceless denizens" savours of hollow sentimentality.

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5. "Forests and Their voiceless denizens"—"Their" covers Only the wild life in the forests but not all wild life wherever found.
6. "Wanton and wasteful destruction"—Any destruction which is not wanton and wasteful would appear to be permitted, which is not correct. "Unnecessary" would be a better word.

III. Suggestions for amendment

"I give my solemn pledge to protect our country's wild life and its forests from unnecessary destruction".

E.R.C. Davidar.

Wild Life is Threatened

By

E.P. GEE

In spite of our preoccupation with international crises and other such important matters, we should not lose sight of some urgent changes which are taking place in India. Only by careful planning now can our natural resources such as forests and wild life be preserved for future generations.

As far as wild life is concerned there is a 'state of emergency' in the world. European and North American countries, which are more experienced and knowledgeable in nature conservation, are alarmed at the rate of growth of human population and consequent shrinking of forests and wild places, with resultant decrease in wild life everywhere.

That is why Britain, Switzerland, the U.S.A. and other countries have launched their national appeals for a World Wildlife Fund. For unless a 'Noah's Ark' of endeavour and financial assistance can be launched quickly to save the world's endangered species of wild life from the flood tide of human apathy, thoughtlessness and indiscriminate killing, there may be no wild animals left in fifty years time.

Since A.D. 1 the world has lost for ever over 200 kinds of wild animals and birds. Not only that, but also the rate of loss has been increasing sharply with the growth of human population everywhere.

Up till 1800 A.D. the rate of loss of wild animals alone was one for every 55 years. From 1800 to 1900 it was one for every $1\frac{1}{2}$ years. Since 1900 it has been one animal lost each year. In future, unless careful planning and preservation are done, this rate of loss will increase rapidly.

In addition to these 200 and more kinds of animals and birds lost since A.D. 1, another 250 are now threatened with extinction—unless we can now take steps to save them in time.

In India, during the last thirty years alone, we have lost for ever the Indian cheetah, the shou deer, the lesser one-horned rhinoceros and the two-horned rhinoceros; and very possibly the pygmy hog, the hispid hare and the rusty-spotted cat are now also extinct. Of birds we have lost for ever the pink-headed duck, the mountain quail and Jerdon's courser.

The following animals and birds of India are now very seriously endangered: the Kashmir stag, the Indian lion, the Indian rhinoceros, the brow-antlered deer, the great Indian bustard and the white-winged wood duck.

Enormous advances have recently been made by many countries in the realms of science and technology. But how much remains to be learnt and done in the field of nature and conservation of valuable natural resources! Historians may write in later years, if the human race survives the present dangers of nuclear war, that the generation of the decade 1960-70 was 'reaching for the moon and stars' with space craft, and neglecting the problems of this planet with its population explosion, deforestation, over-grazing and destruction of wild animals, birds, fishes and the like.

Each living creature that becomes extinct nowadays is the product of more than two-and-a-half million years of evolutionary development. Once lost, a living creature cannot by any means be re-created. Man cannot create the simplest living creature, not even a worm.

In the olden days of India's history, there were some efforts at conservation of natural resources. Consider the measures described in the Artha Shastra, attributed to Kautilya about 300 B.C., when certain forests 'with game beasts open to all' were specially protected. And in 242 B.C. the Emperor Asoka's fifth pillar edict gave protection to fish, animals and forests.

What is being done in India now to preserve natural resources, such as wild life? The Indian Board for Wild Life at the Centre is powerless and has no funds: it can only advise States and try to co-ordinate any efforts being done by the States.

It is entirely up to the State Governments of the Indian Union to conserve what is left of the country's rich heritage of wild life. The State Forest Departments are responsible for

the preservation of wild life and for the enforcement of protective legislation in all the lands under their jurisdiction.

But if the Forest Minister of a State, and the Chief Conservator of Forests of a State, are too preoccupied with other things and have not the time or the personal interest in preserving wild life, then little or nothing gets done and the destruction of wild life by poachers and the bombing of fish and so on continues unabated.

Unless strong, effective action can be taken now by the authorities in India, backed by a strong, enlightened public opinion, then our grandchildren may well ask

"Daddy, what was a wild animal?"

Wild Buffalo of North Lakhimpur, Assam.

When I first came to Assam I was asked to assist villagers chase off herds of buffalo. I well remember the first call—they even offered an elephant for my use. I was young and very green, so ventured forth with just my 12 bore to do this good deed. It wasn't long before I learned from the mahout that his elephant was an excellent shikar elephant and wasn't afraid of anything including tigers—except wild water buffalo! Providence kindly spared the newcomer from any contact with the buffalo on that occasion.

Years of varied shikar experience, benefits from the experiences of others and the equipping of myself with a 375 H & H Magnum intervened before my first buffalo kill. I was quite surprised, however, at the lack of actual buffalo experience by most hunters.

The report had come in that a man had been killed by a wild buffalo. Soon a long petition was presented to the authorities by villagers who said this buffalo had come into the vicinity of their villages and was even chasing them off their fields during morning ploughing. The necessary order was issued that it might be killed if it could not be chased out.

I suggested to the villagers that they try to isolate it and when they knew its location, to call me. About 1.30 one afternoon they came. They knew where it was, and had left a sentinel in a tree to keep track of it in case it should move off.

It was only 3 miles from our house, plus a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile tramp through almost hip-deep mud and water. They finally pointed out an old white ant hill suggesting I take my stand there and they would try and chase it past me.

Amidst much shouting, throwing of stones and sticks and the yapping of village dogs, we could hear the beast begin to move. I was waiting for it to come into the sparser grass where I might get sight of it. Three times it came within six yards of the clear patch, snorted and turned back. The villagers with me became very discouraged and said we should give up, as it surely had an evil spirit and we could do nothing to stop that. I suggested they try once more. This they did venting all their rage and enthusiasm and the shout came that it was circling behind me. I got a bare glimpse of its shining hide through the grasses, debated whether I should shoot or not and decided it was now or never.

The shot struck home and the buffalo reared and turned right towards us, coming head-on with all his remaining energy. When he was no more than three yards away, my second shot entered behind its shoulders and it crumpled at the base of our anthill. The anthill was about five feet high, the buffalo six feet plus four foot of horns! I had had a good first hand introduction to buffalo fury!

After one final shot, we examined the beast. They said the man-killer would have a wound between its horns because some local shikari had sat in a tree after the man was killed and got a direct shot into its skull. It had been stunned, but got up and ran off. Was this the one? The bullet hole was there squarely between the horns. Later on when skinning the head, the 12 bore ball was found flattened against its skull. It had done no more than irritate the animal.

It proved to be an old bull, with fair horns as buffaloes go nowadays. It was a lone bull, extra to the herds, one that could have been spared for legitimate shooting if regulations had permitted.

Every summer we can expect herds of buffalo to move in close to North Lakhimpur town. The summer of 1962 was not an exception.

This annual migration is fascinating to follow. The animals seem to move in a definite pattern, and by a fairly well fixed time-table. One path of migration brings one herd or more up through the Rangali area about 3 miles from town. In years gone by they would spend three or four days there; then move on, and cross through the same rice fields close to the same track on back to the foothills. In 1961 and '62 the movement has ended by the main trunk road, as just north of that the rail line has been constructed and this is no small barricade as the rail line level has been lifted very high above the swamps. This has also caused a change in the water levels of the swamps and thus a new set of circumstances for the buffalo.

The timing of this movement is coordinated with the ripening of the winter rice crops and the lush growth of the new seedling beds, and is influenced by the rising of the flood

waters. These herds move in from the south, the Gagor and Lohit areas, where the flood waters rise high and force the buffaloes to higher ground. Naturally this brings them close to peoples' houses and villages and even endangers human life. A few years ago I was called out to shoot a bull that had killed a man. He was an old bruiser, with the best set of horns I have seen on one yet and had scars of gun-shots and arrows. Lives are endangered as people try to chase the herds from their fields and as they might meet them on the fringes of their villages. Since the above mentioned buffalo was shot, another summer another man was killed by a bull and in another case a cow killed a villager whom she just happened to meet along a path.

This year the high floods were a little earlier than usual, but the winter rice was ready and the seedling beds also. First a small herd, an advance guard maybe, arrived. Soon they were followed by others. With their usual path of migration cut off they stayed on in the Rangali area. The villagers became more and more disturbed as their seedling beds were stripped clean just when they needed the seedlings to plant. The winter rice they were depending on was being eaten during the nights by the herd. Patience wore thin. Various representations were made to the authorities. One group of villagers came to me and the necessary order was secured.

Usually the order given is that the herd may be driven off with gun fire. Only as a last result is permission given to kill the herd bull if necessary. Many years of experience have proved that chasing them accomplishes little while 12 bore gun fire may just infuriate them all the more—and until the herd bull is killed the herd will not disperse. With an order allowing me to kill the bull if necessary, I went to their help.

In all I made five trips to the village area. On four of these visits I saw wild buffalo, everywhere face to face from twenty yards to a hundred yards away. The first attempt the villagers put on was a brave beat and brought six out into the open. They were quite some distance away and among them was a bull. They evidently got suspicious of our tree and turned back. They were chased out again and went right out into the clear along the edge of rice fields and went on and on, through villages and fields, people screaming at them all along the way. We thought this had chased this group out. But, no, during the night they returned. Another time we hid beside their trails in the deeper jungle. That day the views we had will be long remembered. First a cow with a yearling calf stood in the high grass looking right at us and sauntered off not having the slightest clue we were there. Then a cow with a young calf, then a young bull. The young bull we waved a hand at, and he stampeded off at his wits end! That was the only day I didn't have a camera along, and it was the best day for pictures!



The hole between his horns caused by a 12 bore ball. The ball was found flattened against its skull. It had only dazed the animal temporarily and eventually healed over.



The Buffalo.



The corrugations and the chipped horns indicate his age and many battles.

Then came July 12th. The villagers came reporting the buffaloes near the main road. This was ten days after the order had been issued and the herd was still there. During the interval I had to make a trip out of station, so lost some good opportunities.

I wasn't too pleased with the set-up this day, as the buffaloes could easily make an end sweep which would be at quite some distance, making identification difficult and shooting tricky. As on the other day the bull may take cover in amongst the cows and calves, thus protecting himself. On the other hand there was the slight possibility that it would come out and march right past us in good view and short range.

I cannot say enough for the courage of the beaters. Just a couple of days earlier a buffalo had charged a man and scratched him with a horn. On one of the beats a buffalo charged a beater who was on a small mound of earth. As the buffalo viciously attacked the mound the beater took four strikes at him with his dao (long knife).

It was a hot blistering afternoon as the beaters went to work. We all knew it would be hard to get the buffaloes to move from the cool cover of the swamp grass. The fellows worked hard, moved stealthily from one little tree to another, never knowing when they might suddenly come upon a stubborn buffalo. Finally there was some movement. The tall grasses swayed as they moved. Then dead silence for a long time. The beaters moved in more closely, and soon the buffaloes began to move in earnest. Out into the clearing, just where the shot would be the most difficult they ran at full speed. The villager beside me confirmed that the bull in the lead was the bull. Following close on his heels was a cow and a young bull. I ventured a shot. I had loaded my 378 Weatherby with first a hard nosed bullet and below that two soft nosed. As I let the first shot fly the bull collapsed, the young bull jumping over its body and on its way. The other two shots were fired to make sure it wouldn't get up. Realizing the bull was 9 feet 8 inches nose to tail and 6 feet 1 inch at his shoulders, I was again proud of the Weatherby.

The Horns were not much, as they aren't these days. It was what the Assamese call a "Bengali" Buffalo. Nevertheless, it had the short stout horns. Right horn 35 inches on outside curve, and 17 inches in girth at the base. The left horn 56" and 18 inches girth. The corrugations indicated his age.

On just such occasions, it isn't just the success of the hunt that counts. One learns many things as one chats with the villagers. Villagers' secrets flow freely in the friendly moments as stories are exchanged. I have learned much through the years in this way and feel there are some things that must be given attention. Maybe Government policies will have to be changed so they might be more realistic in their approach to conservation and protection.

I have been asked to give some information on buffaloes here in North Lakhimpur and along with the above experience it might be appropriate to give a few notes herewith. I will try and pose some of the most asked questions and answer them as well as I can.

What are the regulations?—There has been a lot of confusion regarding them. There are certain statements in the Reserved Forest Shooting Permits. It is therein stated that certain Mouzas are protected areas for buffalo: i.e. Nauboicha, North Lakhimpur, Kadam, Gohain, etc. Some thought this applies only to reserved forests of these Mouzas. No one has seemed to actually know. Recently the Chief Conservator informed me that they had found that the buffalo regulations come under the Arms Act and not under the Forest Department, so the Civil Administration is responsible. Any further information would be appreciated. On the other hand, in the clarification, it would seem that some definite revisions are most urgent.

How many buffalo are there?—This is anybody's question. I have probably seen as many wild buffalo as anyone. Some locals who are in the know, would guess at a couple of hundred. They are fairly numerous as yet. Along with this the question has been asked if there are sufficient to allow shooting them. To this part of the question I would like to elaborate considerably.

The answer is *YES, IF*...If there is common sense management of this matter. At present nobody may shoot, so everybody is shooting. I know of and have heard more stories of buffaloes that have been shot than you might imagine. And what is being shot is mainly cows, young heifers and young bulls—but by far the highest percentage are females. Why is this? Two reasons. Some communities take advantage of the situation for meat. On the other hand I know of Hindus who have shot cow buffaloes out of desperation to save their crops. Furthermore village firearms are not adequate to deal with a mature bull.

This to me indicates the lack of proper regulations. While on this latest effort one village leader said they had made several representations to the authorities about these buffalo and would start to shoot freely if something wasn't done soon. And this they do! The buffalo just shot had two bullet scars from village guns. I would guess most of these poor beasts have been shot at with muzzle loaders and 12 bores.

To get this under control as has been said so many times over, the legitimate sportsman is the best protection for the game. On this recent buffalo chase the villager with me after having seen all the buffalo so close and so clear said "Someone else would never have let that cow, or that heifer, go by." Village guns are adequate to kill only young stock.

I would make two concrete suggestions:

1. A certain limited number of permits should be issued each year for shooting bull buffaloes in this area. This might be upto a total of three. We know that the buffalo is a prized trophy. Therefore, some revenue too could be gained in this way. I would think two fees for permits should be scheduled, one for residents at Rs. 100.00 and one for non-residents at Rs. 250.00. This should be charged just for the permit. Then royalty should be realized at say Rs. 250.00 for the resident and Rs. 500.00 for the non-resident.
2. In addition to the above, some arrangement should be made such as a "Buffalo Control" Licence, similar to the elephant control licence with a limited number of licencees in an area. They should be allowed to chase off, or shoot if necessary the herd bull as a protection for the villagers. There might be one such license per mouza.

How about the Pabha or Milroy Sanctuary?—Anyone who knows buffaloes and their habits and knows the topography of this district would find the following very obvious:

1. **Too Small:** Only nineteen square miles in size for roaming buffalo herds.
2. **Unsuitable for Year-Round Sanctuary:** I have seen more buffalo outside the sanctuary than in it. There should be a provision for a vast area which includes high as well as low land to allow for their movement to higher lands during floods.
3. **Domestic Cattle Grazing within Sanctuary:** This is being carried on with a station for domestic buffalo inside the sanctuary. This has only one advantage and that is the inbreeding of the wild bulls with the domestic herds. On the other hand it brings the wild animals into closer contact with more disease. It was interesting with the buffalo just shot. Its hoofs showed the early stage of foot and mouth disease.

There is a vast area of Unclassed State Reserves East of North Lakhimpur. These might be turned into a buffalo sanctuary. If there is a feeling that a buffalo sanctuary is desirable, then it should be planned so that it fulfils its purpose. Some have raised the question of 'WHY a sanctuary?' The species is not in danger of extinction as it has its domestic counterpart. The wild buffalo has already degenerated pitifully in this area. Whether necessary or not, the conclusion is plain that the Pabha Sanctuary is not serving its purpose.

In closing, though I am a relatively new subscriber to CHEETAL and a new member of the Society, I am deeply impressed at what is being done and for the information being made available through the periodical. Another time I would like to make some comments regarding BISON (Gaur) in this area.

K. Wm. Hagstrom,
Baptist Mission,
North Lakhimpur, Assam.

India's Wild Life

India's wild life has variously been described as 'rich', 'beautiful', 'unique' etc. and justifiably so. The term which should, these days, be as widely used is 'vanishing' and it is in this context that I propose to write, in the centenary year of Indian forestry. My brother foresters will no doubt speak and write at length of India's great achievements in the domain of forestry, pure and simple: there should, in all fairness to the 'junior' partner in the relationship, be something about the dumb denizens of the forests, the jungles and the countryside.

A hundred years ago when the British started forest reservations and an infant forest department, the country was teeming with wild life. The administrators, often soldiers, of those days alternating as they did between their mofussil headquarters and their tents, shot something almost every day. Readers of the fantastic exploits of Colonel Pollock in the Assam of those days could easily believe that he shot a rhinoceros or a wild buffalo before breakfast as an appetiser! Bags of hundreds of tigers were a commonplace and a Dooars resident had the unenviable record of over a hundred rhinoceroses! In the west, the Indian lion, whose domain once stretched as far as Allahabad, was meeting with equally merciless treatment, the continuance of which into the early years of this century resulted in its being confined to a very small corner of India. It was the custom to indulge in shikar and there was very little else to occupy one's leisure in those days; the average person had no provision of India's future, the galloping millions and their demands for room and food. And on the credit side, be it admitted, there came good rules governing hunting in the reserved forests although these mainly catered, until recently, for the privileged classes.

With the gradual evolution of administration, there came about a state of affairs wherein wild life received greatest protection where it was richest—under the forest law and in the

reserved forests by well organised forest departments, while it received least protection where it was most in need of it—in the areas outside the reserves, where the Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act gradually became a dead letter and its enforcement, by the civil and police authority, a case of omission rather than anything else. This state of affairs has tended to become accentuated with the years, until we are rapidly approaching a condition of 'wild life deserts' in regions outside the still, comparatively speaking, well protected reserves. This does not mean to infer, however, that inside the reserves themselves all has been well. With the inevitable predominance of a new type of forest officer—one who, while being expert in yielding calculations and revenue realisations, is not necessarily interested in shikar and, *ipso facto*, in the fauna that provides such sport—and the growing pressure on forest departments in the shape of planning for expansion of forest working, the degree of attention to protection of the fauna, it must be admitted, declined. On the other hand the concept of multi-purpose management of a forest estate, both for conventional produce and for a game crop, has yet to take root in Indian forestry, which has hitherto discussed wild life mainly from the point of view of its damage potential. Censuses of game animals and birds and ecological surveys have yet to find a place in plans of management, and decisions on close and open seasons, bag limits and other regulatory measures have hitherto been largely empirical. In a nutshell the basis of scientific management of wild life in India has yet to be laid.

Some ten years ago the Government, assisted mainly by the foresters of India, brought the problem of wild life and its protection into focus by creating the Indian Board of Wild Life. At the time they had the chance of a truly magnanimous decision in voting for separate wild life departments instead of insisting on retention of the main custodianship of India's wild life as their historical prerogative. Only the future will show if this was a wise decision. Whatever it is, we are now compelled to acquiesce in a situation which, while apparently consigning the areas outside the reserves more and more to the status of 'wild life deserts'—since the civil authority shows no more signs of interesting itself in the problem to-day than it did ten or even twenty years ago—yet (and this is the redeeming feature) leaves the door open for the development of special wild life branches of the forest departments themselves. But—(and it is a big 'but')—this will depend largely on the degree of priority assigned to the wild life problem. At present this is very low—in fact it is really 'at the bottom of the bucket' for almost anything has, so far, been getting priority over wild life. True, several sanctuaries have been formed in India but these are, when considering their size in proportion to the main forested areas, insignificant. While behind their creation is a philosophy which has its dangerous implications, for there is the risk of it engendering a complacent frame of mind. It is not the creation of a few square miles of sanctuaries which can save the wild life of India. What is wanted is much more attention to the question and its difficulties by India's forest

and civil administrators generally, special and adequate machinery in the shape of revised legislation, separate branches of the forest departments devoted to the task and a much greater emphasis on education, publicity and propaganda to convince the people that wild life is entitled to a place in India. In the final event the last is probably the most important—for the future of India's wild life is in the minds and hands of India's people.

What is threatening our wild life? First the rapid destruction of habitat, a process which has been accelerated in recent years by the extension of cultivation, often in marginal areas which after a few years under the plough are doomed to revert to scrub jungle and weeds. Here the emphasis must be on intensive rather than extensive cultivation, a policy which even from the point of view of enlightened self interest will justify itself in improved yields. Then there is the burden of superstition and ignorance which threatens certain of our species, notably those which, like the rhinoceros, are believed to yield products of medicinal or health value. Next there are the tribal customs of ritual and indiscriminate hunting which, without any taboos to act as checks, have practically exterminated the wild life in certain parts of India. But most important of all is the misuse of crop-protection guns and the abuse of powerful modern weapons and their attendant evils, the motor vehicle, above all the jeep and the improved road systems, by unscrupulous sportsmen and poachers. Informed persons are convinced that this factor more than anything else, has been responsible for the rapid disappearance of wild life in many parts of India. The 'meat' animal and bird have come under tremendous pressure in the years since Independence, when the number of gun licenses in the country has been doubled or more and new values of sportsmanship have come in.

What are the measures of assistance that India's patient Wild Life is entitled to expect in its struggle for survival? From the authorities: greater awareness of higher priorities for the problem; greater promptness and vigour in dealing with breaches of the law, particularly in areas outside the reserved forests, by the civil and police; more protective staff, equipped to deal with the modern poacher in the reserves; better utilization of the existing organisations, such as the State Wild Life Boards; raising of the whole subject of wild life management to a scientific plane to bring it on a par with the rest of forestry, thereby conceding that wild life is an integral part of the forest. From the public: a sympathy for wild life and an understanding of the need to find a place for it; a much greater display of the willingness 'to live and let live' and the suppression of the instinct to kill on sight; moderation in shikars and respect for the game laws; instruction of the young, in which the educational institutions have a great role to play; support for bodies which are working for wild life and contribution of individual effort, in support of wild life protection.

India, a predominantly agricultural nation with large sections of its people vegetarian and averse to the taking of wild life, presents problems of a different nature to those

of Africa, where the threat to wild life is now receiving international attention and assistance. While we may not have the enormous concentrations of mammals which that continent possesses, we also do not have a meat-hungry population whose agricultural base is of a different and less stable nature than ours. The methods envisaged in tackling the African problem, i.e., exploiting the surplus potential of wild animal meat on sustained leases to feed the native population and as a replacement for the, at present, wasteful methods of poaching, do not therefore directly interest us, except to show us the way in the management of our own fauna. One of the greatest attractions of tourism in Africa are the unrivalled concentrations of Wild Life in certain parts of that country, an attraction which brings in much needed revenue and foreign exchange and it should be our purpose to achieve something like it, through a combined exploitation of our wild life and the often beautiful surroundings in which it is found. One of India's most prominent ambassadors for tourism is the tiger, in some ways as big an attraction as the Taj Mahal, and while continuing to protect it we should exploit it with reason. Our rhinoceros, our buffalo, our bison and our elephant are all similarly great attractions to the visitor to India while our lesser species have their own charm. In putting these attractions to work in a planned and rational manner within the framework of our mighty forests and attractive sanctuaries the foresters of India can both serve the cause of wild life and assist the economy of the country, while for the millions of animals which have suffered and gone there could be no greater satisfaction than the insurance of a future and satisfaction of the instinct of survival for their species.

In the hundred years of scientific forestry that we are now celebrating, the foresters of India have faced many a challenge not inherent in the very nature of their work. They have been the traditional guardians of wild life during all that time. They have saved the rhinoceros from extinction and protected the elephant, the bison and the wild buffalo. They have given birth to the game laws of the country and nurtured wild denizens of their forests to the best of their ability. They have surmounted a period of change in the years since independence with success and are entering a new phase in their relationship with the people of India in which they are expected to play an ever increasing role in the economy of the nation. Is it too much to expect of them that they accept the challenge of wild life and the task of saving it from disappearance in the country side in general and of consolidating it in the forests which are their particular charge?

‘Forester.’

Sportsmanship Towards Other Fishermen

Here the Biblical Golden Rule is not so applicable as the older negative precepts of Confucius: "Do not unto others as you would not have them do unto you." And, here, a moment's consideration should show any fisherman who possesses the least element of courtesy what not to do—and he who is without courtesy should not fish. He is fitted for no pastime but solitaire. For instance, an angler catches a fish or two at a spot, or perhaps has raised one, and is trying again. Only boorishness or thoughtlessness—itsself but a form of boorishness—will cause another to rush in and interfere with his fishing. The first fisherman found them; they are his while he is there. Would one pool player rush in and interfere, with another who is shooting? And the invariable result of the interference is that neither catches any fish; the second man has ruined the sport of the first, and gained nothing by it.

However, the application of the Confucius precept will vary widely according to circumstances.

In the wilderness it may mean that a sportsman, seeing another on a small lake, will refuse to fish it and will go elsewhere. But on opening day on one of the crowded trout streams, it may mean little more than refraining from digging one's elbow into the ribs of the next fisherman.

The answers to these questions, and to all others pertaining to courtesy and sportsmanship toward the other angler, are so obvious that they need not be given. Therefore, this is written merely to point out the necessity of courtesy in fishing if one wishes to be known as a sportsman rather than as undesirable, a "poor sport".

That many who fish are not sportsmen in this respect, as in others, is no reason for lowering one's self to their standard, or absence of standards—it is not the conduct of the poorest sports that should be emulated.

Consideration for the other anglers has a very pleasant by-product: Sportsmanlike, courteous fishermen soon come to recognise each other when they meet, to smile, to speak, and thus originate some sterling and life-long friendships with kindred souls. A true sportsman is always a desirable friend, for he who is a good sport in fishing will almost invariably prove to be a good sport in all other things: honourable, a "square shooter".

The angler, meeting another on lake or stream, should always ask himself, "If I were in his place, what should I like and reasonably expect him to do under these circumstances? He who honestly answers and lives up to his answer will be welcomed into the circle of the best sportsmen, no matter how crudely he casts fly or plug, how few fish his limited skill permits

him to catch—the rest will be glad to teach a fellow sportsman. He who does not ask himself that question, or who cheats on the answer, is also cheating himself out of the pleasure of associating with sportsmen. He is relegating himself to the company of the poor sports with whom he belongs.

(A brief extract taken from: The Fisherman's Encyclopedia)

Maj. E. G. Mainwaring.

Brown Hunter !

I am a shikar outfitter, and I suppose the Indian counterpart of the well known African White Hunter. My profession, if it be one, is really quite new in this sub-continent. Perhaps my view on shikar might be of interest, coming as it does from a professional, or would one say quasi-professional ?

Until recent years those who hunted big game in this country were mainly residents, Indian or otherwise. They thus had ample time and opportunity to indulge in their sport with the aid of the professional Indian 'shikari', but without recourse to any shikar outfitting organisation. The occasional visitor who hunted big game out here almost invariably did so as the guest of a resident sportsman, and he had no need for a professional shikar outfitter. Thus, there being no demand, there existed until comparatively recently no shikar outfitter operating out here. With the fantastic changes which have taken place in the last few years in air travel, changes which have made the world so small, it was inevitable that more and more visitors from abroad would come to this country. And it was inevitable that these visitors would include at times sportsmen wishing to hunt new game in other lands. The overseas visitor to India, the tourist, is, in this day and age, rarely one of the idle rich, even though he may or may not be very well-to-do. He is usually a very busy and hardworking man, with just so little time to spare for a holiday. With tigerland but a day's flight from, say, New York, it is now possible for some sportsmen to consider a short hunt in India, when this would have been quite out of the question for them but a few years ago.

The tourist sportsman, with comparatively little time at his disposal, can hardly get down to learning the ropes himself. For his hunt, perhaps one of a lifetime, he requires

someone who will get done all that is needed for its success. And thus the demand is born for the shikar outfitter, and when there is a demand there will be a supply. Whether a shikar outfitter serves a useful purpose in the realm of sport, depends upon the outlook of the outfitter himself. If he considers himself a purveyor of trophies, I make bold to say that that outfitter has no place in the world of sportsmen. But if he feels and behaves as a purveyor of sport, then he does satisfy a vital need in sport, and his profession is honourable and worthwhile.

The shikar outfitter, who is a sportsman and believes that he is to give his client sport, not just so many animals and so many trophies, will always consider the *manner* of the hunting rather than the mere results of the hunt. He will also satisfy those clients who are lucky enough to be sportsmen. The feelings of the trophy hunter pure and simple who might hunt with him may be disregarded. But I would venture to say that a shikar outfitter who is himself a sportsman and hunts efficiently in a sporting manner, will generally find that his clients will be influenced by him into sportsmanship, even though they might have at first thought to hunt with the securing of trophies uppermost in their minds.

I know that today only too many people hunt in the cowardly, illicit and senseless manner of hunting off a motor vehicle with spotlight at night. When a foreign tourist hunts in this manner under the arrangements of a shikar outfitter, the outfitter is mainly to blame. The client might get his trophies, but he has really been given a poor deal. For the hunt of a lifetime, it is really a shame to barter the thrill of a possibly charging tiger in a beat with shooting this same animal off a sneaking jeep with a spotlight at night. True, the tiger's skin remains the same no matter how shot. But the tiger's skin remains the same if bought in a shop. The client who buys just a trophy from his outfitter could have bought the same cheaper from a taxidermist. But when the outfitter has acted as a purveyor of sport, has sold this intangible commodity to a sportsman client, then both parties in the transaction gain, shall I say spiritually? And for such a transaction all sportsmen should give their unqualified support and approval.

I have been fortunate in my clients. All those who have hunted with me as my clients have, by and large, been sportsmen. A few references to certain incidents may prove of interest and show that the tourist hunter is by no means always the bloodthirsty butcher many imagine him to be.

In one of my commercial hunts we had the misfortune of wounding a tiger which came out in a beat and gave a shot to the gun in question at ten yards range. The gun in question was not my client, but was shooting as it had been decided that any one in the party getting a reasonable chance would shoot. When it came to following up the wounded

animal my client, an elderly gentleman, insisted in taking part in the follow up. This inspite of his having had little big game hunting experience, and my having made clear to him the risk he was undertaking. We lost that tiger, but some days later report had it that he was lying up in a certain jungle. By then I thought it safe enough to beat for him as one would for an unwounded animal. As it turned out he was not in the beat, but a fine sambhar stag came past my client. As it was obvious by then that there was no tiger in the beat, I asked my client whether he would care to shoot the stag. He replied "We are on a mission of mercy. It were best not to be distracted by other game". This gentleman had not shot anything in India upto that time.

During another hunt, my young son fatally wounded a magnificent bison. My son had gone on ahead after it, and my client and I were moving up behind him rapidly. As the beast had not been wounded by my client, I suggested that he stay behind while I caught up with my son. His reply was "I have no immediate relatives. Why should I not share in the follow up?" He was an elderly gentleman, and I would say one who would hardly have been able to look after himself if we had been involved with an angry bull bison at close quarters in very dense cover.

I understand that in Africa the White Hunters generally do not permit their client to take part in a follow up of wounded dangerous game. I consider this an insult to the client, and always give him the opportunity of sharing in the danger and the honour of following up an animal which he has wounded.

As I consider myself a purveyor of sport, my shikar arrangements are very extensive so far as producing a tiger is concerned, but the client does have to face a modicum of risk when this is indicated. Big game hunting without *any* risk becomes a travesty of sport. My 'machans' break no records for height. I feel 6 feet as plenty high for a tiger beat 'machan', and the guns are always within reach of a charging tiger, *if* it could get past our shooting. For impromptu tiger beats rather than incur the noise and disturbance of erecting a 'machan', my client stands on his own flat feet, with myself, of course, alongside. Only a few weeks ago my client, a very sporting young man, shot his first tiger in a beat on foot at a range of 15 yards. The animal took a .465 through the heart, yet went 150 yards before finally dropping. This same young man during this hunt had the unusual experience of shooting two bears during a beat carried out *at night!* In Bihar we may shoot carnivora after sundown, but of course not off a jeep. In this case my client was *on foot*. It came about thus. We were bivouacing under a friendly tree near a village where quite a lot of sugar cane had been cultivated. We had just finished dinner and were awaiting the coffee when noises in an adjacent sugar cane field suggested that wild pig were feeding in it. My client, accompanied by a friend of mine to act as covering gun and my young son to flash an electric light, walked

to the other side of the sugar cane field, while two of my 'shikaries' made a noise this end. About this time I heard growls in the sugar cane patch, and realised that we were dealing with bears and not pig. I shouted a warning, and almost immediately two bears broke cover and finding the shooting party in the way promptly charged. My client put in a good right and left with his .465 into the charging brutes which failed to stop them. One came straight on, while the other circled and attacked from the rear. My friend then joined in the firing and my son was hard put flashing the light to the front and rear alternately as shots were fired alternately at the two bears charging from these two different directions. Finally the brutes were dropped, but not before they had taken three well aimed shots apiece and had got within five yards of the trio they had charged. When I reached the party my client immediately apologised for shooting bears with an electric light—he had been expecting pig when things happened rather fast. He was extremely relieved when I assured him that he had just been hunting in an extremely sporting manner. I think he will treasure that particular memory even though the Indian sloth bear is no great trophy. It is the manner of the hunting which counts, not just the quarry itself.

Earlier this year I took out an old gentleman of seventy bison stalking. Frankly, I did not think he would be able to put in the 15 to 20 miles per day over rough ground which was called for. However, he had been a world famous celebrity in tennis in his younger days, and his earlier hard condition came of help now. He duly collected his trophy in the approved manner. He was surprised when I told him that he was the first man to shoot a bison in the area by stalking and tracking in perhaps ten years. Bison were shot around there every year, but off jeeps at night, and not by tourist sportsmen either. I am convinced that tourists are by no means the greatest offenders with regard to shooting off jeeps.

When a man comes half way round the world for the hunt of a lifetime, and incurs heavy expenditure by way of airfares, it is essential that arrangements for a tiger hunt be extensive. Tiger hunting in the first instance calls more for good staff work than anything else. I generally try to get my client his tiger in a beat. The difference between seeing a tiger in daylight and at night is as seeing a colour picture and one in black-and-white.

Tiger beating is an art, especially when a tiger has to be located and then brought to a particular gun and not just a line of guns. I make it a point of getting my client to understand what is going on. His part may be but to press the trigger and point the rifle straight but he does require to at least appreciate how a tiger is brought to a gun. In this way with experience he too may eventually take a part in the running of a hunt some day. Hunting a tiger by beating, when the animal is produced to a single gun, is an extremely delicate operation, and the man pressing the trigger deserves to share in the planning and the running of the hunt.

If a tiger is to be bagged by beating by a particular gun within a limited period—and time is often the crux of the question—quite elaborate arrangements are called for if the hunt is not to depend unduly upon the element of luck. Tiger hunting by beating is a reasonably expensive affair.

The venue should be chosen bearing in mind that tiger beating can generally be only successful in areas where there is a *tradition* of tiger beating and where there are consequently time tested, known, traditional tiger beats. An area where there are comparatively plenty of tigers is not good enough. In a non-traditional tiger beating area one can often pull off a successful impromptu tiger beat, but one cannot hope for regular successes as in a classic beating area.

As time is at a premium, an early 'kill' is required, and so I consider a dozen buffaloes as bait as the minimum to be put out from a week before the hunt commences. However, a mere sufficiency of bait put out is not enough. The bait is only of use if near a covert where a tiger will lie up in, and round which a tiger beat has been worked out. One must remember that in this type of hunting one does not go to the tiger, but awaits his arrival on ground of one's own choosing.

All 'machans' for a tiger beat should be erected in advance, and the beats carefully worked out and firing lanes cut. Of course, most of these prepared beats will never be used simply because no 'kill' occurs near them.

I consider 100 men about right for the average tiger beat. Of these I would use 60 as 'stops' and beat with 40 men. If short of men I would scrimp on beaters but not on 'stops'. In some of the areas I hunt, beaters gather to a tiger beat as ants to honey. In such cases I often have to put up with the expense of 200 and more beaters. I make it a point of never turning back a volunteer for a tiger beat as local goodwill is all important, and a tiger beat is to the village folk quite an event in their lives.

I now use a simple method of 'stopping' evolved by friends of mine. All that is required is some half a mile of rope and a couple of hundred yards of cloth. Tiger beats with a dozen men can be pulled off with this arrangement, but I still use many men when these are available and turn up for the beat.

To avoid putting all one's eggs in one basket, the hunt should cover a good area. Tiger beats as much as 80 miles apart may be worked from the main hunting camp provided the staff work is good enough. I generally book more than one shooting block, and as a matter of principle keep the selected blocks separated by at times as much as 100 miles and more, the base hunting camp being in between.

The putting out of so many baits over a considerable area involves organisation. Buffaloes for bait have to be transported to the various places involved. Each buffalo requires two men to tie it out every evening, remove it, if unkilld, in the morning, feed and water it. Each tiger beat, or group of beats, if some are close to each other, must have a competent 'shikari' in charge capable of taking independent action for arranging a beat when a 'kill' takes place. This is essential as at times there will be more than one 'kill' in a day, possibly separated by many miles or even tens of miles. Unless the 'shikaries' in charge at the respective beats can take correct independent action to collect beaters, decide on the positioning and choosing of 'stops', prevent stray people wandering into the covert to be beaten, etc., there will be no possibility of running two tiger beats in a single day. And there may be no other chances during that hunt, perhaps the hunt of a lifetime for the client.

Naturally, an effective communications system is required to relay news of a 'kill', or 'khabbar' as it is known. The news may have to be relayed 80 miles by runner, cyclist and finally motor vehicle. Of course, it would have to reach camp early enough for the beat to be put through that very day.

Curiously enough so far I have not had a lady client shoot at a tiger. I suppose in the fullness of time this defect will be remedied. But if she happens to wound the animal, the position will be embarrassing. I think it was the Hon. W. Best who said that he did not approve of women shooting tigers. For if a lady wounded a tiger no gentleman could let her follow it up. And no lady would permit a man to follow up for her a tiger she had wounded. As long as problems such as this worry both client and outfitter, we shall know that their hearts are in the right place, and the world of sport has nothing to fear from their activities.

But how many hunters, non-tourist included, think on these lines?

A. Imam,
The Grove,
P.O. Hazaribagh, Bihar.



Gaur, or Indian 'Bison', in Kanha National Park, M.P.

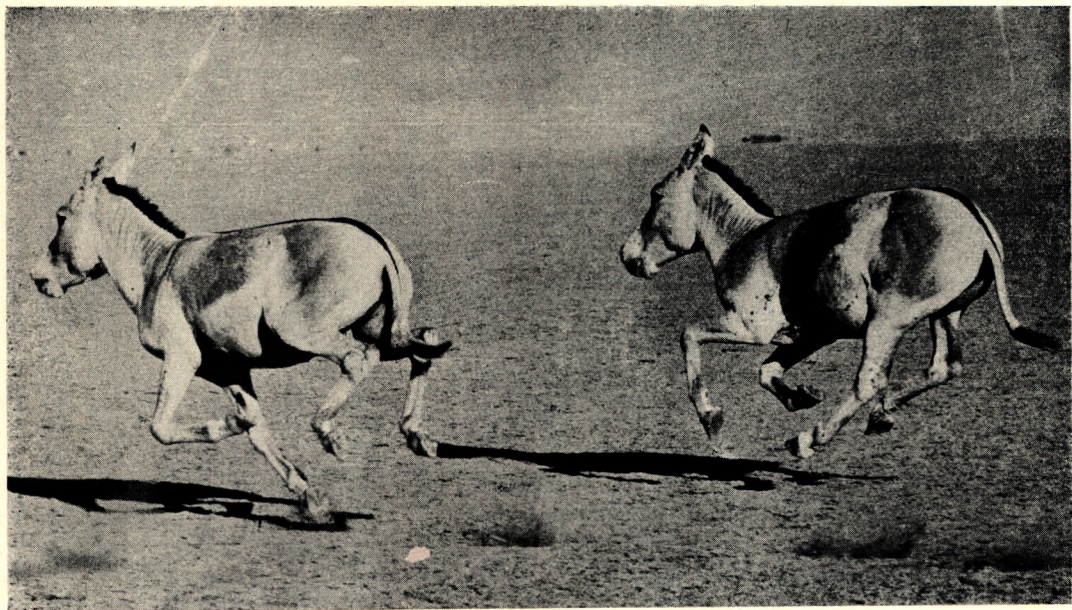
Photograph by—E. P. Gee



Wild Elephants in Periyar Sanctuary, Kerala.

Photograph by—E. P. Gee

(For article see Page 18)



Taken from a jeep travelling at 34 m.p.h.

Photograph by—E. P. Gee



Indian Wild Asses on the Rann

Photograph by—E.P. Gee

The Indian Wild Ass

(*Equus hemionus khur*)

By E.P. GEE

Although the Indian Wild Ass was placed on the list of animals requiring protection, by the Indian Board for Wild Life at its inaugural session at Mysore in 1952, little or nothing seems to have been done in this direction. In fact these wild asses were regarded by some local naturalists as being 'there in their thousands and well able to look after themselves.'

My curiosity about this species got the better of me, and I decided to pay them a visit last February. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, of whose Survival Service Committee I am a member, sponsored my visit. The State Forest Department of Gujarat, with the customary superlative hospitality of that part of India, welcomed me and gave me every kind of facility.

I found not only, as I had feared, that South African Horse Sickness had taken an unknown toll of their numbers recently, but also that in 1958 and in 1960 a number of them had died of *surra*. Together with the Divisional Forest Officer of Kutch and the Range Officer of Dhrangadhra I toured the southern and eastern sides of the Little Rann of Kutch, and collected some valuable information which will be published soon in a 'Report'. Later we made a rough estimate of their numbers, locality by locality, and the result came to under 900 animals. This is considerably less than the previous estimates of 'thousands'.

The Indian Wild Ass is a brightly-coloured, handsome-looking creature, in conformation rather like a zebra. It is quite unlike the local smaller, longer-eared, dingy-looking domestic donkey, with which it does not interbreed.

Among a number of recommendations made by me is one that 'a physical count (census) be done by the Forest staff as soon as possible, and repeated annually or at least at regular intervals of two years or three years'. It is to be hoped that a complete ecological study of the Indian Wild Ass will be conducted under competent supervision in the near future, so that this interesting and rare species may be preserved for future generations.

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A Natural Sanctuary In the Himalaya: Nanda Devi and the Rishiganga Basin

By

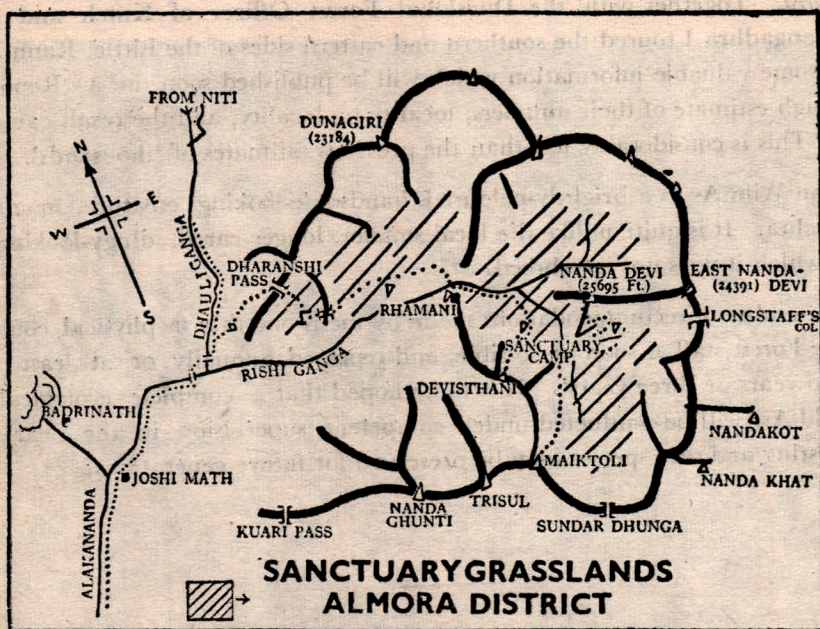
HARI DANG

The Doon School, Dehra Dun

Introduction

Though I had heard of the natural sanctuary formed by a ring of high mountains around Nanda Devi in 1942, it was only in 1960, and again in 1961, that it was possible to actually visit the area, primarily with the object of mountaineering and photography. The second of these two trips eventually came to be sponsored by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, the Mount Everest Foundation, London, and *The Statesman* newspaper, and the following report is based on information gathered during these two trips.

Nanda Devi is not only the highest mountain in the central Himalaya, but dominates 250 inaccessible square miles of the most beautiful mountain scenery in the world. The area



around Nanda Devi is ringed by a continuous high ridge which descends below eighteen thousand feet only where the Rishiganga River, draining the numerous glaciers of the region, has cut a deep and difficult gorge through the western side. Nineteen known summits of over 21,000 ft. stand on this ridge, which is located between the Dhauliganga and Corriganga rivers of the Kumaun-Garhwal Himalaya.

Much of this 250 square miles of mountainous terrain is alpine forest and pastureland, some accessible alps used by village flocks of sheep and goats, the greatest part the haunt of a wide variety of animals and birds characteristic of the higher Himalaya of the Indian region. The floral abundance alone is astonishing, not only putting the famed Bhyundar Valley (Frank Smythe's Valley of Flowers) into the shade in comparison, but also offering a potential hunting-ground for the plant-hunter because of its insular virginity. If detailed and expert surveys were carried out in the region, many instructive and useful relationships, ecological and biological, might emerge about environmental adaptation in the complete absence of human influences such as are not possible elsewhere in the higher Himalaya.

It is the purpose of this article to consider a far-sighted plan for preserving this whole self-contained watershed as something more than a Game Sanctuary, which is its present status according to the Forest Department. This may, it will be suggested, be profitably made the first Wilderness Preserve in India, after the pattern adopted in the United States.

Historical

The Survey of India had always looked upon the gap in their knowledge of this area as more or less inevitable because of its extreme inaccessibility. Light was first thrown on it by men working under the incentive of mountain-climbing and exploration.

W.W. Graham, accompanied by two Swiss guides, Ulrich Kauffman and Emil Boss, was the first enthusiast to try to force the gorge of the Rishi where it meets the Dhauliganga, some fifteen miles above Joshimath on the route to the border pass of Niti. A lone explorer and some hardy sportsmen, who have left no records, were his only predecessors, and he failed entirely in his attempt to traverse the almost overhanging lower section of the gorge, reaching the relatively easier middle-section of the Rishi over the 13,000 ft. high Dharanshi Pass situated on the outer ridge to the north, where it descends from the 23,184 ft. high Dunagiri Peak. Graham claimed to have climbed Changabang, an extremely difficult mountain above the foot of the toughest portion of the Rishi gorge, from where the Nanda Devi massif is only five miles away.

It was left to Dr. Longstaff in 1907, to make another attempt, and this he did with the Swiss guides, the Brocherel brothers, and General Bruce, of the Gorkhas. He also entered

only the easier middle-section of the Rishi, known as the Outer Sanctuary, over the Bagini pass to the north, and though successful in climbing Trisul (23,360 ft.) he too failed to find a feasible route over the last few miles of the Rishi gorge, despite gallant attempts from both banks of the thundering, constricted river.

In 1926, 1927 and 1932, Hugh Ruttledge, I.C.S., then Deputy Commissioner of Almora in Kumaun and a mountain-enthusiast, tried three other approaches to the Inner Sanctuary; from the south and south-west, he was brought up short by the hanging-glaciers of Sunderdhunga Col and the glaciers below Trisul overlooking Nandakini river. From the north-east, up the Timphu glacier, the prospect was no easier and the party abandoned the attempt, Ruttledge remaining convinced of the uniqueness and attraction of the Sanctuary, and equally certain that the Blessed Goddess, Nanda Devi, was then beyond human capacity or endurance to approach because of the obstacles it imposed on its votaries.

It was Eric Shipton and H.W. Tilman in 1934 who had the privilege of pioneering a memorable route to the Inner Sanctuary by forcing a passage up the upper Rishi gorge after weeks of effort. They rounded off the trip by descending the treacherous and insecure ice-fall over Sunderdhunga Col to the south which had so frightened Ruttledge. One of their two sherpas, Angtarkey, still recalls that trip with righteous horror not unmixed with pride.

Since that first crossing, a survey party guided by Eric Shipton, and four expeditions to climb Nanda Devi have followed their route: the French, who lost two climbers, in 1951, Major Jayal, who did not make the summit either, in 1955, and Mr. Gurdial Singh and the writer, accompanied by Major John Dias and others this year, in 1960 and 1961.

Geographical and Ecological

The central Himalaya can roughly be described as that section lying between the river Sutlej in the west and the river Kali (Mahakali), the Sharda of the plains, in the east. The Goriganga is a right bank tributary of the latter and drains a very large glaciated area. The Alaknanda, of which the Dhauri is a left bank tributary, joins the Bhagirathi at Devprayag to form the Ganges of the plains. The Rishiganga is the major left-bank tributary of the Dhauri and runs roughly east to west, draining the vast system of glaciers within the Nanda Devi area which, including in the term both the Outer and the Inner Sanctuaries, coincides with the Rishi's watershed.

Nanda Devi stands like a reigning deity at the end of the ridge which may be said to represent the shorter central arm of a reversed letter E, the two outer arms representing the high ridges which enclose the inner arm. Two other arms enclose the two outer arms, and



The Dibrugheba alp, amid temperate forests of Silver Birch, *Rhododendron campanulatum*, Spruce, and Cypress. One of the most beautiful spots in the Himalaya.



The Inner Sanctuary's grasslands, coming down to the southern Rishi at the base cliffs of Nanda Devi.

(Photographs by—Gurdial Singh & Dilsher Singh)

PLATE II



The main and east peaks of Nanda Devi. The climbing route used by expeditions lies up the ridge to the right of the main summit, merging into it tangentially.



Some more of the grasslands and mountain-scenery of the Inner Sanctuary.

(Photographs by—Gurdial Singh)

Dunagiri and Nanda Ghunti are the western terminations of the northern and the southern arm respectively.

Nanda Devi Khal (19,390 ft.), known popularly as Longstaff's Col because that doyen of Himalayan exploration first climbed it from the east, and Sunderdhunga Col (c. 18,000 ft.) are the only two passes ever crossed into the Inner Sanctuary, but both are out of question for all but expert climbers. The only route feasible is up the Rishi, and this is now fairly beaten up to the foot of the really impassable gorge, known as Rhamani because a torrent of that name joins the Rishi from the right bank there. Beyond this inner gorge lies the Inner Sanctuary, an area of nearly a hundred square miles of mountain and meadowland, gentle grassland, and rugged cliff faces, which is unique even in Himalayan experience, bearing as it does the indications of Divine handiwork. This was *terra incognita* even to the local shepherds and poachers, who would sacrifice the excellent musk-deer and Burrhel prospects inside rather than face either the difficulties and dangers of the gorge or the wrath of the Blessed Goddess who they felt, would surely punish any such desecration of 'Dev-bhum' (holy ground) by mortals.

Ecologically, the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, including the Outer Sanctuary, may be divided conveniently into the following types :

1. Mixed-Temperate and Temperate forest, growing along hillsides and in sheltered re-entrants and warmer valleys to heights of 12,000 ft. Blue Pine, Deodar, Maple, and Horse Chestnut near the confluence of the Rishi with the Dhaulī give away to Spruce, Cypress, Fir, Rhododendron (*R. campanulatum*), and Silver Birch higher up.
2. Temperate scrub continues above the tree-line, occasionally to as high as 15,000 ft., near the snow-line. Dwarf Rhododendron (*R. anthopogon* and *R. lepidotum*) and *Berberis*, *Cotoneaster*, and Juniper are the chief representatives of this class.
3. Alpine pastureland, varying in luxuriance from the lush and succulent, flower-rich alps of the lower areas to the scrawny, thin soiled growth higher up. This kind of vegetation extends as high up as 18,000 ft., some mosses and pads extending a thousand feet higher in favoured locations depending upon season and insolation.

In the Inner Sanctuary, especially where Silver Birch stands are few, there are extensive grasslands and excellent soil; villagers working for us have often expressed wistful longing to get their flocks up for the rich grazing, and been treated to cold looks from conservation-minded mountain-lovers. In addition there are miles of snowfields, rock faces, and ice-cliffs, of apparent uselessness yet invaluable as hallowed ground for the ardent mountaineer or nature-lover. Here too, are lakes that no one has ever seen, hundreds of high and not-so-high mountains no one has ever climbed, passes that have yet to be crossed, and cliffs and valleys

that are still sacred to their pristine inhabitants, the Burrhel and the Thar, the Snow Leopard and the Musk Deer, and other slippery, lonely-hearted, eagle-haunted crags and pastures, beyond the leap of goat, beyond the gaze of man, that still echo only to the shrill calls of the Monal and the melancholy whistle of the Snow Cock. No village or human habitation mars this pristine wilderness.

Flora

Lacking expert scientific knowledge, I have not made any wide and detailed observations or checklists, but I have personally seen or photographed, or seen companions photograph over three hundred different flowers, and this in the short period between climbing and travelling.

Animal Life

According to the Uttar Pradesh Forest Authorities, the entire area lying between the mountains Nanda Devi, Dunagiri, and Trisul is a Game Sanctuary, in the sense that no one is permitted to shoot there and shooting-permits are not issued. In fact, this is a 'paper' Sanctuary, like its coeval the Govind Ballabh Pant Sanctuary in the Tons Basin in Garhwal. Both have never been visited or explored personally by the contemporary 'paper' forest officers, nor are likely to be visited in the near future. Poaching on a grand scale is normal in the Tons Basin, and not uncommon in the Rishi Basin. Musk Deer are the chief quarry, hunted ruthlessly and bravely by the poor villagers for the valuable musk-pod, which sells at lucrative rates in the Kumaun and Garhwal fairs. For, strange to relate, the Government has given complete protection to the Musk Deer and yet permits the export of large quantities of musk to dollar areas—at any rate, this was the situation till last year.*

Burrhel (*Ovis nahura*) abound all over the less rugged areas of the Rishi basin, and often even over difficult terrain. Their numbers have dwindled greatly since Tilman and Shipton first saw large herds. This is largely the result of poaching by villagers in the Outer Sanctuary. Still they are even now excessive for the limited feeding which the pastures offer. Sheep and goats from villages as far away as Wan give Burrhel keen competition, and may be spreading epidemics that might be decimating their numbers unknown to us. The tenet that the wilder the animal the less its resistance to infection from outside is only too true in this case. The Himalayan Thar (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*) is a very plentiful game animal in the basin, frequenting the most difficult terrain in the gorge of the Rishi, coming out into the grasslands only in the post-monsoon months for a spell before retreating to overhangs and

*The export of musk is still unrestricted. — Ed.

precipices for the winter. This animal, too, is suffering decimation by meat-hungry villagers armed with new gun-licences. Without guns, both Thar and Burrhel, more so the former, are vulnerable through their habit of coming to lower rock-faces when the snow lies deep on their summer haunts. Here they are cornered and chased by villagers and actually murdered with staves and spears. The means adopted to exhaust them before administering the coup, are many and ingenious, including lassoing them at night.

Musk Deer are still very plentiful, but are constantly molested, both by shikaris with guns and by shepherds with dogs, the latter being remorseless trackers of this highly odorous creature. Each time we went up the gorge, we met at least one large party of shikaris, who had had consistently successful hunting. One possible cause of the Musk Deer's abundance may be its greater propensity to take refuge in heights where even the shikaris dare not follow.

The Snow Leopard is another glorious animal which remains extraordinarily common, when a comparison is made with other mountain area. This is only the result of indifference from villagers, who are either too scared or too poor as marksmen to hunt him, but also of the abundance of Thar, Musk Deer, and Burrhel, its natural prey.

Though a few Black Bear have occasionally been seen, they are not common in the Rishi Valley, and this is only natural when the difficulty of terrain is considered.

Serow are not uncommon in the lower and less steep mixed-forests of the Dudhganga, Rontinala, and Satpula-nala. Streams like these originating in the glaciers on either side of the Rishi abound, there being no fewer than twenty major and easily one hundred minor glaciers which feed the Rishi. All these subsidiary valleys have their own pastures and forests.

Snow-foxes, Marmots, Musk-rats, and Tailless Rats abound.

Of bird life, Monal Pheasants, Snow Partridge, and Snow Cock are very common in their habitat. The Himalayan Rubythroat, seen at between 13,000 ft. and 16,000 ft., was a constant companion of base-camp off-days, serenading the occupants from the early hours of the morning.

The Blue Rock Thrush was encountered in pairs and parties of up to four couple, flying around above alpine grassland. The Himalayan Greenfinch, Hedge Sparrow, Redflanked Bush-Robin, Whitecapped and Plumbeous Redstart, the Stonechat, the Kashmir White-throated Dipper were some of the more interesting birds seen but not clearly identified. Detailed observations were not made as time was short, and mountain-climbing the main objective.

The Lammergeier or Bearded Vulture and the Golden Eagle were also seen. A large eagle (?) was seen in the act of swooping down and carrying off a Thar ewe.

Prospects for the Future

Though hitherto known to only a few enthusiasts, it is not unlikely that the area will arouse—has in fact, already aroused—great curiosity and covetousness, the former among prospective tourists, the latter among villagers desirous of pasturage.

Having observed with deep and helpless regret what the paper Forest Department has done to the Valley of Flowers further west (I refer to a four-foot high boundary wall which has been built to fence off a horticultural scheme for some vague medicinal plants, right across the valley), it is my intention that a similar programme be frustrated by forestalling the authorities by making a wiser suggestion to them which they cannot afford to ignore.

Poaching, rampant now, is bound to increase as the number of guns increases. Already the Milam and some other valleys of Kumaun and Garhwal have been shot clear of Musk Deer, Burrhel and Thar, and skins of Burrhel and their young ones murdered in winter can be purchased for a few rupees in any hill fair and market-centre from Garbyang and Almora to Pipalkoti and Chamoli. In other mountain areas of India mountain game has been wiped out *en masse* by the army and the Border Police, and a likely increase in military activity in Garhwal would deal a like blow to mountain game here, hence the need for at least one region where not only the shooting of game but also the construction of monstrosities like the Bhyundar boundary wall can never occur. This requires something more than a Game Sanctuary status for the area and, in the current official mood of 'paper' sympathy for conservationist ideals, it would not be difficult to muster sufficient strength and momentum for the idea of a Rishi Wilderness Preserve to push through the necessary measure through Parliament by which act alone can such a status be obtained.

Summing up

Perhaps I am carried away by my enthusiasm for the Nanda Devi area, which has for long represented to me an unattainable ideal, an intensely personal wilderness reservoir. This need not detract from the value of this wilderness in its unspoilt and untampered condition. If we can retain the Rishi's Sanctuary without a motorable or even a bridle track, without boundary walls and Rest Houses, without official interference or tourist-huts—and I do not think of the next decade only, but of the next century, granted that we survive this decade—then perhaps those who do not migrate from the earth will find some consolation in its tranquil snows and mist-wreathed pastures, its stupendous screes and gentle swards. This is the true aim of this article, though an inadequate attempt has been made to cast it in a formal mould.

It Happened in India

SAMBAR BAGGED—Public Auction Fetches Rs. 420

A young sambar, aged about one year, shot by a poacher in a reserve forest and seized by a forest guard during the small hours of July 28, was sold in a public auction here.

For the venison it fetched Rs. 420 which appears to be a fantastic price as a live animal would hardly have fetched such a price.

[*Editor's Comment.* The above news item speaks for itself. Unless the penal provisions of the forest acts are greatly increased and include confiscation of weapons, vehicles etc. used in the commission of such acts, poachers will never be discouraged from pursuing their nefarious meat-hunting. How much, we wonder, was he poacher fined?]

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SADISM WITH BIRDS

BY EVE

(Reprinted with kind permission of the Editor of 'Insight')

The Birds of the air signify freedom to us. They delight us with their beauty, their warbling and their courtship. And yet unthinkingly we inflict on this most harmless and helpless of God's creation, unimaginable cruelty.

Fowls and ducks, because their flesh is so tasty are our highest victims. When hawkers go round selling them they are carried by their legs, three or four tied together, head downwards. Even when they are carried around in baskets their legs will be tied together and as many as possible crowded together. Naturally they cannot stand and lie there, heads down, legs up. Neither the women who buy them nor the men who sell them are even aware of the discomfort of birds if not their actual suffering.

At Moore Market some birds have enough room in their cages, but the ones to be disposed of quickly are shut away in small baskets. The only precaution is that they be kept alive till sold. If water and grain is given to them it's only to keep them alive. The birds are starved but they have methods of making them appear fat and heavy to prospective customers.

But their most pitiful state is in transit. You see their baskets thrown about on railway stations, stuffed to the brim. They are ready for a long journey, maybe of many days, unable to move, with hardly any air to breathe and the minimum of food and water, not to mention the insanitary condition. This in the land of Budha, Mahavira and Gandhiji.

The little jaybird is used by bird catchers as a decoy to trap other birds of the air. The method is beastly. The birds are blinded by sewing up their eyes and then let loose. A professional bird catcher caught by the S.P.C.A. had squeezed 32 jay pheasants into a small basket after muffling their eyes and fastening the beaks with sutures.

Cock-fights are another abominable spot. They are forbidden because of the gambling involved rather than the cruelty, but the sport is as popular as ever, especially in the outlying villages of Madras. There are so many ways our little feathered friends are tormented. The pretty parrot is trained to predict the future. Imprisoned in a little cage he is let out for a moment to pick out one of several covers containing the destiny of his illiterate customer.

The worst cruelty of all is inflicted on the poor little snipe. The men who sell these tasty little morsels clean and dress them for the customer. They do not kill the bird first. Their method is to simply pluck the feathers of the live snipe.

Recently it was found that live pigeons were confined in a China box in the display of fireworks.

In a certain town in South India two lorries were caught for overcrowding. One had 55 goats in it and the other had packed in 900 ducks. The owner of the 55 goats was fined Rs. 15 but the owner of the 900 ducks was acquitted. It was a clear case of cruelty. The infirmary officer wanted to prosecute, but the accused was acquitted by the Magistrate on the ground that no mention was made in the S.P.C.A. Act regarding the ill-treatment of birds and that the word *Animal* mentioned in the Act will not include *birds*. Did the Magistrate have the intelligence even of a bird?

[Editor: This ghastly story needs no comment].

"How They Do It Elsewhere"

Unite for the 'Unicorn'

(Extract from "Newsweek" July 2, 1962).

A favourite diversion among the oil-rich Arabian Sheiks is hunting the oryx, a swift, double-horned antelope that can move at 25 miles an hour for long distances without flagging. The Sheiks have often been seen chasing the oryx across the sands of the Arabian Peninsula in jeeps and Cadillacs, shooting them down with automatic rifles and submachine guns. This is considered great fun. But the oryx can't reproduce as fast as hunters shoot, so only a few oryx were left at the last count. The sport is dying.

A living legend is also dying. When an oryx is seen from the side, its straight, 2-foot-long horns appear to blend into one. This profile apparently helped create the legend of the unicorn—the mythical beast mentioned in the writings of Aristotle and Pliny the Elder, and celebrated since Biblical times for its fierceness and bravery (male oryx shield their females and young from attack and have been known to charge headlong into a threatening car).

The plight of the oryx-unicorn has aroused the world's animal lovers, including Britain's Prince Phillip. "Some Arabs believe they must prove their manhood by killing an oryx so that they will inherit its legendary courage and virility," Prince Phillip said in a recent New York speech (Newsmakers, June 18). "Now this may have made a little sense years ago .. when...the odds were a bit more even, but today, when upto 300 car-borne parties go out together to get-brave-quick by mowing down oryx with Tommy guns, the whole thing becomes sheer idiocy."

Early this year, the Fauna Preservation Society of London, with the help of the World Wildlife Fund, organised project "Save the Oryx" and despatched leathery-faced Ian Grimwood, chief game warden of Kenya, to the Aden Protectorate. After a ten-week hunt with noose and pole, two male oryx and one female were captured, then flown to a Kenya game farm. Their benefactors now plan to move the trio to a suitable place, such as in the hot, low-lying New Mexico or California deserts. Far from the Sheiks of Araby, the oryx herd of three may increase to respectable size within three decades or so. "Then may be we can return some to the Arab lands", Grimwood says, "if they have seen the light by then."

There was already one good omen in Kenya last week: The female, conservationists reported, may be pregnant.

Children's Corner:

BAMBI, THE SECOND

It was in the month of March, in the year 1959, that a large party of our friends and ourselves were camping on the forest-rest house compound in the Kunda Raj Estate. One of the Raj Kumars who owned a spotted deer wanted to part with it as a present to Ralf and Yvonne Scotts our very first 'shikar clients'. The Scotts, however, declined the kind offer for they could not take Bambi back to America with them. One of the members of our party suggested the Calcutta Zoo and my heart stood still, for the death of my other deer was still fresh, and something I still shudder over. And deep down inside me, in the core of my heart was a longing to love and cherish another deer, and relive the chapters so to speak. I mentioned it to Tootoo my husband in the privacy of our tent, tears misted my eyes and my husband who understands me well realised how much the thought of an animal going into captivity upset me. "I wish that Beru would part with Bambi to me, I'll look after her well," I pleaded earnestly. "A very good proposition," my husband informed me. "I'll speak to him tomorrow about it." And so he did the following night, while we were all sitting around the campfire, watching the chir wood going up like fire-crackers. "I'd love Yvonne to have her," stated Beru simply. "I am not anxious to part with her to the zoo."

Bambi took to me forthwith and attached herself exclusively to me. She somehow sensed that it was there, that she belonged. She shared my passion for tea, and every morning when the blush of dawn stained the sky, she would come scamping along right into our tent and single me out and her moist, prickly tongue would awaken me to another day. I'd lift the flap of the tent to find Sibna our bearer ready with our morning-tea and Bambi's too in a bowl. I would put it out to her and she would drink greedily, kicking out her little legs just the way they do while suckling their Mother.

Bambi was a primitive being, and one night I watched, her my heart in my mouth, she literally fire-walked right through our camp-fire. I daren't say anything for fear of alarming her and causing more damage, but the smell of burning hoofs is all that warned me that she had been burnt. But she was not perturbed and moved along with easy grace, without so much as flicking her ears, and she carried on grazing much to our surprise.

At last the time came to pack up our traps and hit the road for home, and along she went with us in a large basket that we had to order for the occasion. But somehow she knew where she was going and sensed that all was well, for she was very rested and calm, sitting on her bed of straw chewing the cud.

When we reached home, she was delighted to be free once more, after having been confined to a basket for many hours. She followed me about, inquisitive as ever, slithering about on our polished floors with the easy abandon of a ballet-dancer. I went to the dressing-table to run a comb through my hair, and there she was behind me peering into the mirror and startled at her own reflection. She nosed my powder box and upset the contents, and there followed a series of sneezes which were certainly not lady-like. And then her eyes alighted on a razor-blade that was lying there. In a matter of seconds she had picked it up, and crunch, crunch, she chewed it. I sprang up and tried to wrestle it from her mouth, but she was as determined not to part with it to me, and I am glad to say that no ill effects resulted. And so she settled down to the carefree existence of our home, happy and contented, doing what she wanted, going where she wanted and eating what she wanted, even my prize-blooms, I must confess!

She played a game all by herself in which only she and the garden-hedge figured. She would scurry into the hedge, stay a minute and then scamper around the compound in a mad way, and then returned to the same spot. On and on she would go amusing herself, till she was exhausted and had her fill of exercise, and then she would sit down calmly and chew the cud. She was a bookworm all night and enjoyed eating magazines and newspapers, digesting them with rapidity, and a born naturalist, for she would admire my collection of cacti and succulents. In her eagerness to absorb knowledge she would take out a piece for inspection, and it would be in her mouth and pouch in no time. And did she love tobacco? I'll say she did. She was a mobile ash-tray, and if I left a tin of cigarettes out by mistake, she would upset the tin, spill out the contents and have a meal on them.

She loved visitors and was a born entertainer. I remember one evening a dear old gentleman called over to see us. He was wheezing most terribly and it distressed me. I had some medicine which I felt would do him good, and so I left him with a cup of coffee in his hand and some magazines to look at while I went in search of it. When I returned it was too late. Bambi had appeared on the scene. Her head was in the cup and the contents were on my guest. His face registered surprise and discomfort all in one. My apologies and another cup of coffee were hardly any recompense for stained pants, but the dear soul was a good sport and there was nothing to worry about.

Bambi, I may tell you, had a vindictive streak to her nature, and could never be thwarted. It all came out when I offered her a biscuit. She was very partial to them, and it went on, one biscuit after another; for each time I stopped she would put her ears back and try to bite, so she succeeded in blackmailing me to parting with the whole tin of biscuits to her, and when there were no more to give, she rushed to bite me. Fortunately a servant

chased her away in time. But after this incident Bambi was never the same towards me again, and I had to be careful not to permit her to be near me. It made me sad to know that she hated me and the love of days and weeks and months and years had turned to hate, but I thought too of human-beings who behave in a similar way and if with their intellect and reasoning powers to guide them they can turn, sometimes over a trivial matter, why then Bambi, with only intuition to guide her cannot be blamed. And so I still loved her and petted her with a chair between for safety measure, but my heart was sad.

And then it came about that a friend of ours presented us with a male spotted deer, not a very good-looking animal mark you. Still I was delighted, visualising little bambinos. And Bambo as we named him settled down to the carefree life at our home. His life was free. Where before he was chained and locked in a godown, here the countryside was his to roam at will, and roam he does, but he also respects his freedom, for he always returns home to us. And did Bambi take to her mate? If she did there was no indication of it and what I noted was that she ignored him. But that after all is a woman's way and Bambi was certainly not lacking in the wiles, and as for poor Bambo he was at a disadvantage for he was in velvet.

Bambi is now missing for the past few months after having lived with us for over three and a half years, and I do not know where she has gone. I have promised a reward for her return and all round the news has gone that she has strayed from home. I like to think of her as an independent soul, going out to find her mate into the open forests, her home and her heritage. And may be: who knows? she may return to me with her little bambinos to let me know that we human-beings cannot plan the life for them when it comes to love and marriage. Possibly, animals also fall in love and I would like to think of it as so, and so I do not fret for her, for I think of her as happy and contented in her natural home, the jungle, with her mate beside her and her little ones at her side. And knowing her I know too that she will not forget the years that have gone, shared with us in our home. She will think about them and relate stories of us to her children and they in turn may say "Mummy we do not believe you" and her reply may be "seeing is believing my darlings" and back they will all come home to us to make our lives happy once more.

YVONNE IMAM.

The Doon School Deer Park

In 1960, partly to celebrate our Silver Jubilee, partly for our own edification, it was decided to add a small deer park to the amenities of the place. Two Cheetal hinds were given to us by the Forest Research Institute, and safely installed. They were named 'Niti' and 'Mana', two well known villages in the Uttarkhand division of the U. P. It seemed that they would lead a rather cloistered existence unless provided with a husband so we kept our eyes open for a stag. Before long we were offered one, a half grown animal with, at the time, two small antlers. The problem of his transport was rather difficult. A station-wagon was borrowed, but it is difficult to persuade an unwilling stag to step into a station-wagon. A tranquilising injection was decided on, and I am told that the animal absorbed two or three times the quantity that would put an average human being completely to sleep before he became only very slightly tranquillised, in which state he was bundled into the vehicle, losing in the tussle one of his two small antlers. This did not matter since he was due to lose both in the ordinary course of nature, and he was duly installed, and given, for some reason or other the name of 'Shyama'. The next addition was a hog-deer fawn who naturally became 'Bambi', and a Kakar. The latter died suddenly—so suddenly that snake bite was suspected—but was soon replaced by a second, who, surviving an attack of pneumonia and a severe mauling from a dog that got into the enclosure, is now in good health. The latest addition is a baby Sambhar hind which was picked up probably after her mother had been shot, and which is so small that it is not yet able to cope for itself but is being reared by hand.

So we now have four distinct species and eight individual animals, for I should have mentioned that both 'Niti' and 'Mana' presented us in November with a fawn each—both flourishing, growing rapidly and able to graze for themselves.

Now for their characters: the most complex character of them all is 'Shyama' the stag. Soon after joining the establishment he dropped his remaining antler and started to grow new ones under 'velvet'. The swellings grew and grew until each antler was about eighteen inches long, with the usual three 'tines'. About April last year (1962) he rubbed the velvet off and became a fairly mature young stag. Immediately his character changed. From a mildly behaved young man he at once became a cantankerous old gentleman. His mating call—more prolonged than the shrill yelp of alarm which is so common in jungles where there are still cheetal and tigers and panthers—was heard night and day. He was difficult to approach. The devoted old 'mali' who looks after our deer was attacked more than once. Even when you were outside the enclosure those rapier points would be lowered and, with

the full weight of his sturdy shoulders behind them, he would try and get at you through the wire. I would sooner go into a compound containing a fairly well domesticated half-grown tiger than expose myself to Shyma's moods. I found, however, that if you brought him something to eat he would take it from your hand very gently and allow you, as a great privilege, to scratch his ears.

What is the explanation of this bad temper? I believe he regarded us as possible intruders on what he considered his 'zenana', our two does 'Niti' and 'Mana'. The wild stag in the jungle, as soon as he has cleared his antlers of velvet, gone on 'rut'. In other words he becomes for about a month very pugnacious towards his fellow stags, and fights them furiously for the possession of the ladies available. Poor old 'Shyma' found no rivals except these curious human beings, and the zenana was limited to two hinds. Consequently he must be regarded as a psychological case caused by domestication. In nature he might expect a 'zenana' of perhaps fifteen hinds. Here the 'zenana' is limited to two, and there are no rivals. His 'rut', instead of lasting for one, has already lasted nine months. As soon as he drops his antlers it will be over. He demands our sympathy rather than our condemnation.

The two hinds, 'Niti' and 'Mana', do not offer us such a problem. They are friendly creatures and readily come up to the fence to see what you have to offer them in the way of eatables. Since they have become mothers they have become matronly. At first there was some confusion as to which fawn belonged to which mother. The fawns didn't seem to know, but there was never anything like a quarrel on the subject.

'Bambi', the 'hog-deer' or 'parha', is also a simple character. He has developed a pair of antlers, one point only, about 6 inches long, or less. But what he may have lost in the antlers he has fully replaced in the girth of his barrel-like body. In fact we may have to put him on a reducing diet. In the early spring he had a light brown coat with very distinct spots. This autumn he has lost his spots and his colour has become much darker. Though, as a fawn, he was very friendly, as a half-grown buck he has decided on a policy of non-alignment with human beings. He is only too ready to accept 'aid without strings' in the form of food, but he will never take it from your hand. An obvious neutralist.

Last is my favourite, Kanchan (golden) the Kakar. After the bout of pneumonia, and the mauling from a dog already referred to he has recovered remarkably well. He has developed hairy pedicles but no antler worth speaking of. Perhaps next year he will produce the glory of the Kakar, a three or four inch antler! Kanchan is a most engaging little creature. Often, for the sheer joy of living he will gallop the full length of the enclosure. If you approach the wire he will be the first to come up to see what you have got to offer him. He is always in danger of being driven off by the larger deer. But he is very 'choosy'



Photos by—Yvonne Imam



Young Cheetal of varying ages are seen

Photograph by—E. P. Gee



The stag on the left is in hard horn, while those on the right one
in varying stages of velvet.

Photograph by—E. P. Gee

about food. He will make no effort to secure a bunch of grass, especially if there is competition from the cheetals. What he really likes is apples, especially 'Golden Delicious'. Kanchan is an animal of character.

An old member of your Society, from the Doon School.

POSTSCRIPT:

Shyma, the Cheetal stag, has now shed his antlers and has, as anticipated, become a modest and humiliated animal—a king without his crown. Kanchan, the Kakar, is delighted. No longer afraid, he prances around licking the legs of the fallen tyrant.

WILD LIFE HOWLERS

From a very well known Daily Paper, Nov., 7 1961 an article on preservation of Wild Life.

At the Indian Board of Wild Life meeting at Ootacamund:—

".....deep concern was expressed at the manner in which the Great Indian custard was becoming scarce". [It might well have been a worse misprint than this! Ed.]

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

CHEETAL.

Dear Sir,

Shedding of Antlers by Chital Stags

In your issue of April 1962 you have discussed the time of the year when antlers are shed by chital stags.

I think it is generally accepted that chital stags shed their antlers at all seasons of the year, and that the young are born at all seasons of the year. I have myself observed these two facts, which are naturally correlated, in numerous herds of chital in various parts of India, both in captivity and in the wild.

I enclose two photographs, one of which shows a chital stag (on left) in hard horn, while two others are in varying stages of velvet.

I think there may be a certain season of the year in some parts of India when more young are born than at other times, and therefore a season when more stags are in hard

horn than at other times. And I think that this 'partial season' may vary in different parts of India according to climatic conditions which determine spring and favourable growth of new grass and so on.

I also think it may be possible that older stags may have more of a fixed season in certain parts of India than younger stags do.

But the fact still remains that in any large herd of chital in any part of India you will find stags both in hard horn and in velvet, and young of various ages. I remember R.C. Morris, a very experienced observer, confirming this to me most categorically.

The fact that some States (or former Provinces) of India have laid down certain open and close seasons for shooting of these deer does not mean that the legislators thought there were seasons of hard horn, velvet and so on. They were made for 'administrative convenience', for obviously they could not have the whole year as open season. Some States have made the chital open season to coincide with the open season for sambar, which are regular in their seasons.

Should more substantiation be required, here are some extracts about chital from well known naturalists:

Sterndale, in his *Mammalia of India*, says '...pairing and the production of young may occur at any time, as does the shedding of the horns.'

Lydekker, in his *Game Animals of India* says, 'Although in India most of the fawns are dropped during the cold weather, many are born at other times of the year; and this implies a corresponding irregularity in the shedding of the antlers, which apparently occurs in each buck at a time of the year depending upon the season in which it was born. It is stated in *Badminton Library* that the irregularity in the time of shedding the antlers is more marked along the foot of the Himalaya than in Central India, where the majority of the stags have these appendages free from velvet in January, and shed them about January (*sic*).'

S.H. Prater, in his *The Book of Indian Animals*, says 'But stags (of chital) carrying horns in varying stages of development have been seen at all seasons...Fawns may be met with at any season'.

M. Krishnan, in his *The Mudumalai Wild Life Sanctuary*, says 'Incidentally, stags (of chital) in velvet and in hard horn can be seen at all months...There does not seem to be any defined breeding season; very young fawns can be seen both in March and October'.

Yours faithfully.

E.P. Gee.

Upper Shillong,
Assam.

October 23rd, 1962.

[*Editorial Note to letter by E.P. Gee.* We welcome this letter on the subject of the dropping of antlers by Cheetal stags by such a well-known authority of Indian Wild Life.

Although we admit that the growing and the dropping of antlers by Cheetal is not regular, and that it is possible to find stags in hard horn, stags in velvet, and consequently young fawns at any season of the year; we should like to repeat our belief that in the majority of cases Cheetal drop their antlers about September, are in velvet until January to March, and are in hard horn thereafter.

We had the occasion to observe (Dec. 21st to 30th 1962) a number of Cheetal stags in the Dehra Dun Forest Division. Of some fifteen stags observed, all but one were in various stages of 'velvet', and the exception was an immature animal, with antlers of perhaps 18 inches.

We should like to quote Dunbar Brandon—'Wild Animals of Central India' on the subject. He says: "The great majority of animals drop their horns in August, begin to grow them towards the end of the rains, and are in velvet up to December, when they commence to clean their horns by rubbing on a bush or small tree. Most stags are in full (i.e. hard) horn by March."

Again: "There is a distinct 'rut' in the end of April and the beginning of May, when most of the breeding takes place, and during this period it is rare indeed for a fully mature animal not to be in full (hard) horn."

We believe that Mr. Gee is wrong in stating that the fixing of the close season for Cheetal at between September and the end of March in the Dehra Dun and Saharanpur divisions was due to administrative convenience. Had it been so it would have been far more convenient to fix the same close season for all deer. But had the open season for Sambhar—October to March—been applied to Cheetal, the result would have been that most of the Cheetal shot would have been in velvet.

The obvious rule would be that Cheetal should only be shot when 'in hard horn'. But when most of the Cheetal shooting takes place at night from jeeps, when it is impossible to distinguish sex, let alone 'hard horn' and 'velvet', such a rule would not be very effective.

We should welcome further opinion on this interesting subject.]

FORM IV

(See Rule 8)

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I, R. L. Holdsworth, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

R. L. Holdsworth,
Publisher.

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